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THE ART OF MUSIC

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Lillian Nordica as Brünnhilde
After a photo from life

THE ART OF MUSIC: VOLUME NINE

THE OPERA

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THE OPERA

INTRODUCTION

THE opera is a problem—a problem to the composer and to the audience. The composer's problem has been in the course of solution for over three centuries and the problem of the audience is fresh with every performance. In a measure the audience's difficulty creates that of the composer, for it is the audience to which his appeal is directed. On the other hand, it is the composer who sets the problem to his audience, and the easier he makes it the better the audience will like it. The audience comes to be amused, and the composer—the serious composer—would educate it, impress it, inspire it. Between them lies a gulf to be bridged.

Now the composer's problem is a matter of history. Through the whole of this volume it is an ever-present quantity. It is a legacy from generation to generation. It is inherent in the very nature of the art-form. It is this: the opera is a drama and the opera is music. The drama appeals to our emotion by way of the intellect and music by way of the senses; the one applies the test of logic, the other, that of æsthetics, proportions; the ideal of one is truth, the other beauty. How shall a perfect balance between them be maintained? Now in nature truth and beauty are one. A naturally evolved art-form—the statue, the song, or the symphony—therefore is true if it is beautiful. But the opera is not so evolved. It is an arbitrary creation of human

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ingenuity or whim. It started, not as a fact, but as a theory. And there lies the difficulty.

The inventors of opera were a few Florentine gentlemen who, in the year 1600, tried to resurrect an art of two thousand years before. They knew that such an art had existed, the Renaissance had left them its shadow: the tragedies of the classic age. In place of the substance they devised a formula, and upon that formula—a certain kind of poetry and a certain kind of music—they constructed the opera. Primarily that opera was a drama, its music was merely the hand-maiden of poetry. But presently that particular kind of music, being more direct in its appeal (via the senses) than that certain kind of poetry (via the intellect), usurped the major portion of the audience's attention; they cared more about melody than about words and action (such as it was), the actor was regarded as a singer, the opera as a concert. The inevitable happened: the declamation (calculated to be realistic) leaned to the side of pure melody; melody, a thing of beauty, conformed to the æsthetic laws and defied the laws of logic. Form was set above the spirit.

But the spirit would not die. Again and again it demanded the right to determine the form. Composers leaned now to this side, now to that, according to their lights, and the conflict went on. On the one side, the drama, the word; on the other, the music. Meantime another element made itself felt more and more: the scene. Stage pictures became ever more sumptuous. Having, like the music, a sensuous appeal, the scene managed to arrogate to itself a goodly share of the attention. Moreover, the pictures were animated, and so yet another element—the dance—was developed (which, by the way, had formed an element of the ancient Greek 'model'). Lovers of the opera—and their name was legion—now fondly argued that it was the combination of all the arts: poetry, music, and dance

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—even painting. To which critics replied that opera music was the worst music, opera poetry the worst poetry, and opera pictures the worst pictures.

Critics, indeed, began to speculate about the whole philosophy of the thing. Why, they said, should actors sing? People do not sing what they say to each other in real life. To which might be replied that dramatic poetry is no more unnatural than musical speech, for people do not speak to each other in metre and rhyme. Music in opera is merely heightened declamation, idealized speech. Very well, even idealized speech should be *understood*; but vocalization, florid passages, high registers, endless repetitions, are confusing; one cannot understand the words. Moreover, repetition may be well enough, but one does not declaim—even in a poetic drama—in perfectly symmetrical form, in arias, in songs. Worse still, two people do not speak simultaneously in real life, much less three or more (as in operatic ensemble), and as for choruses—mobs do not break into song with a regularity that can only be attained by drilling and maintained by a conductor in the pit. And finally the orchestra—why an orchestra indeed?—does it not cover up what little one might understand of that ‘idealized’ articulation?

To each of these objections the opera-lover has an answer. A soliloquy, in real drama, must be poetic, beautiful in rhythm, in metre, interesting in an æsthetic sense. A *musical* soliloquy, in order not to tire the listener, must conform to the laws of symmetry, of proportion. People whose sentiments are known to the audience may well indulge in simultaneous soliloquies or lyric commentaries, while the beauties of harmony help to heighten the atmosphere of the scene. Here, indeed, is one of the great virtues of opera: people can be made to speak at the same time with beautiful effect rather than an ugly confusion as the result. And in so doing they may be understood, for music is the language

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of the heart, and their very tones will betray the meaning of their words.

All these arguments are justified; only they are not logical—they are not in line with the original ideal of opera—the dramatic ideal. Now from time to time reformers have arisen that have brought opera back into line with these ideals, but the fundamental contradiction, the non-logic, cannot be overcome by reform—hence each successive reform represents a compromise with the ideal, and incidentally furnishes a starting point for fresh abuses. The problem was not solved, and, it seems, never will be. It is a problem based on a misunderstanding—a most magnificent absurdity.

Opera, as we know it and enjoy it to-day, dates from the first of these reforms—that of Gluck, at about the middle of the eighteenth century. All that lies before is technical development, groping around, degeneration and the triumph of decadence; a hundred and fifty years of seething activity from which there remains hardly a note. It was the age of the singers' domination over the composer. Two distinct species germinated in this period: the tragic and the comic, *opera seria* and *opera buffa*. Florence, Mantua, Venice and Naples had been the seed-ground of the new art; Germany produced the first great fruits: Gluck in the *opera seria*, Mozart in the *opera buffa*. In France, meanwhile, the scenically magnificent French ballet-opera of Lully and Rameau had attained to a monumental glory, while Germany and England were raising native works in close imitation of the Italian model.

The next half-century saw the internationalization of opera, the fusion of national elements in the reform species of Gluck, and the growth of a new vitality. The Italian opera had gone through the world. In 1752 the Italian buffonists gave their historic performance in Paris of the first independent opera buffa—the *Serva*

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Padrona of Pergolesi—and from that spark a new flame was kindled: the French *opéra comique*, which substituted scenes of everyday life for the strutting heroics of Classicism, dialogue for recitative, and which with its naturalistic vigor and rhythmic verve influenced both Gluck and Mozart.

Gluck proclaimed the ideal of dramatic truth in the medium of classic simplicity; he became the point of departure for the Grand Opera of France and of all the schools whose first concern was the theatre. Mozart, in his own field, demonstrated the inherent power of music to characterize and idealize in conventional forms the living truths of human existence; profound humanity and transcendent beauty became one in his world of sounds. He gave the comic opera a new depth and broader significance, and in *Don Giovanni*—technically an *opera buffa*—set the first great milestone of the modern music-drama.

Mozart was the confluence of several streams—the Italian *opera buffa*, the *opéra comique* and the German *Singspiel* (which had itself received its first impulse from the ballad operas of England, such as the ‘Beggars’ Opera’ of Gay and Pepusch). He himself gave the first artistic and surviving example of the last-named genre in the immortal ‘Magic Flute.’ From Gluck and the *opéra comique* there came a serio-comic mixture in classic form, with interspersed dialogue, following the post-revolutionary dramatic fashion represented by the *comédie larmoyante*. Of this Cherubini and Méhul were the chief representatives, but the greatest example of the species was again furnished by a German—Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, a marvellous though anomalous isolated unit in the history of opera. Another foreigner, Spontini, preserved the French tradition and bridged the gap to the Grand Historical opera of Meyerbeer *et al.*

Meantime Mozart’s hint at a native German opera

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was taken up by his kinsman Weber, who created the German Romantic dialogue opera with *Freischütz* and set the model for the *durchkomponierte* Romantic music drama in *Euryanthe* (the forerunner of *Lohengrin*). He and his colleagues, Spohr and Marschner, clearly pointed the way to Wagner, the next great reformer.

All the while the Italian opera went its merry way, exalting vocal melody above all else and playing into the hands of the singing virtuoso. Rossini built on the foundations of the eighteenth-century Neapolitans, Piccini, Sacchini, Jommelli, Paësiello, etc., and crowned the Italian *buffa* species with his 'Barber of Seville' (contributing also his share to the French Grand opera with 'William Tell'). Donizetti and Bellini followed in his footsteps, and, while their art signalized a complete surrender to the singing virtuoso, it also prepared the way for their great successor, Verdi.

These various strands, German, Italian and French, came together in the two great figures of the nineteenth century—Wagner and Verdi. Wagner, after deliberately emulating the French Grand opera with *Rienzi* and the German Romantic opera with the 'Flying Dutchman' (not mentioning various excursions into the provinces of Italian opera and *opéra comique*), achieved the greatest reform that the history of opera is able to record. He struck a medium between lyric melody, sensuous arioso and dramatic recitative, and created a musical declamation which was the most eloquent yet evolved. At the same time he summoned from the depths of the orchestra pit a stream of emotional and psychological commentary, a flood of color and a veritable magic of atmosphere, which supports the dramatic power of his words and burns their meaning into the consciousness of the listener with a directness and vividness that needs no intellectual aid. And lastly, he evolved the leading motive from the tentative suggestions of his forerunners, extended its use to cover

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every shade of emotion and psychological suggestion—creating in effect a musical language independent of the word. By applying to these ‘motives’ the classic method of reiterative and generative development, he brought the symphony into the opera and so achieved a dramatic and a formal unity, which, far from conflicting with each other, constitute, as it were, one artistic entity. *Tristan und Isolde* represents the perfection of this style, the ‘Ring’ its most monumental expression. By the extraordinary power of his genius Wagner scaled heights of inspiration which none had yet approached and to which none have yet been able to follow him.

To Verdi, in Italy, no such sweeping reforms can be credited. Nevertheless it must be said that he regenerated Italian opera and brought it for the first time in line with the realistic dramatic aspirations of the age. In his last work, *Falstaff*, he achieved a complete unity and in a measure laid claim to the spiritual succession of Mozart.

One other line of evolution must be noted. The *opéra comique* of France, after reaching a higher artistic level and some measure of dramatic fidelity, nationalistic color and an extraordinary rhythmic vitality, developed into the lyric drama of Gounod and Bizet. The latter’s *Carmen* represents a development which, independent of the Wagnerian influence, achieved a dramatic vigor and realism, a vividness of local color and a sensuousness of melody that is wholly individual. Indeed, besides furnishing a basis for further native development, it became a model for the modern Italian school of realists, the exponents of the so-called *verismo*.

These three, Wagner in Germany, Verdi in Italy, and Bizet in France, are the foundations upon which modern opera builds. The Wagner influence is, of course, all-pervasive and is hard to gauge. In France, Massenet, Charpentier and d’Indy have been addicted to

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it; in Italy all the younger men, notably the newcomer Montemezzi, show evidences of it (while Verdi remains their chief model). In Germany few have escaped it. But it is to be noted that those who have not attempted to follow Wagner's formula (even though they follow his general procedure) have been the most successful. Aside from a few isolated works, such as Hans Pfitzner's *Die Rose vom Liebesgarten* and, in a somewhat lighter sense, Humperdinck's fairy opera, *Hänsel und Gretel*, only those of Richard Strauss can lay a serious claim to the spiritual successorship of Wagner. In Strauss, indeed, we see the ultimate development of that symphonic-dramatic style that is Wagner's historic achievement. The surging, never-ending melodic and harmonic web of *Tristan*, the orchestral and vocal polyphony of *Die Meistersinger*, carried to the *n*th power, together with the tremendous resource of advanced dissonance and orchestral color and sonority that is Strauss's own, combine to make his texture at once the most intricate and technically advanced and the most brilliantly impressive in modern musico-dramatic literature. The general musical method of Wagner and the use of the *leit-motif* have, of course, been adopted by him. Aside from their manifold intrinsic beauties, *Salome*, *Elektra* and *Rosenkavalier* must, as far as contemporary criticism is able to judge, be accepted as the highest development of the music drama of Richard Wagner on its technical side.

In one respect few composers (notably Cornelius, Charpentier, etc., in a few isolated cases) have been able to follow the Wagnerian dicta in the matter of the text. Wagner by his own example and precept taught that the poet and musician should be combined in the one person. But Wagner was also a poet of no mean powers, as well as a dramatist of extraordinary discernment; it is not likely that a genius of such universality will soon rise again. Nevertheless his example has

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borne fruit in this direction too: composers no longer content themselves with inferior librettos, with theatrical concoctions that lack all spiritual depth. (One of the great Wagnerian teachings was that music should picture the inner action, the drama within the human soul and not the mere outward happenings recorded by the words and actions of the play.) Poets of considerable calibre have recently furnished the literary material for an art-form which they may now consider worthy of their genius. Thus Hofmannsthal in Germany, Maeterlinck in France and Sem Benelli in Italy have become the collaborators of a Strauss, a Debussy and a Montemezzi.

There is so far no indication that any considerable advance, or any new principles, have materialized anywhere, that may be said to supersede the great Wagnerian development. The impressionism of the contemporary French composers has been applied with complete success to one opera, the *Pelléas et Mélisande* of Debussy, in which a delicate orchestral texture paints a background so transparent that musical declamation even at low pitch and strength can be constantly understood by the listener. But a certain resultant melodic monotony would indicate no great fertility for this field of operatic development. No worthy successors to the *chef-d'œuvre* of the new style have appeared thus far, and the practicability of the new method remains yet to be proven.

The neo-Russians, notably Moussorgsky, represent an independent development which may in future exert a considerable influence upon the music-drama in other countries; in fact, their music has already left its impression upon the most recent school of French composers. Such works as *Boris Godounoff* are seen to have a certain barbaric splendor and a dramatic power that are genuinely impressive, while their method of procedure (deriving as much from the Italian as from

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the German school, with a generous admixture of native folk-material) is parallel, rather than tributary to that of Wagner.

Thus we see that ever new musical experiments continue to be applied to the musico-dramatic problem. Opera remains the most lucrative occupation of composers and much of their best effort continues to be exerted in that direction. In a sense the situation has been more chaotic than ever since the Wagnerian meteor swept through the world, for composers have found that, after all, Wagner's dramatic theories did not solve the problem for them. In his gigantic genius, an entirely individual thing, lay the secret of his greatness, not in the efficacy of his system. What direction the next reform will take remains to be seen. One thing only is certain: the opera-composer's problem is still looking for its solution, and with it that of the audience, which is the difficulty of a complete absorption of the composer's message.

To cope with this last, it is the duty of the opera-goer, first of all, to acquaint himself in some measure with the composer's purpose—by reading, and, if possible, a study of his work. The difficulty of bringing the proper attention to the intellectual and sensuous sides of the work will be largely dispensed with by a reading of the text before the performance and a comprehension of its underlying thoughts. In the case of the modern music drama an acquaintance with the thematic material of the music is likewise to be urged, so that at the performance a complete enjoyment of the tonal beauties may take first place in the listener's consciousness. And in this connection it must be impressed upon him that the orchestra has at least an equal share with the singers on the stage in the unfolding of the musico-dramatic substance. In the Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian drama the orchestra furnishes the continuous psychological thread upon which the action is

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hung. This thread begins with the opening note of the Prelude or Overture, it runs through the instrumental sections preceding each act or scene and ends only when the last note of the orchestra has sounded. Interruptions of this thread by late-comers, incidental conversation or premature departure are justly resented by the understanding listener, the artist and the conductor, and should not occur in a well-mannered community. No less than the symphony, the opera is a complex work of art, the full enjoyment of which depends upon understanding and complete attention. Being the most artificial of art-forms, it requires, if anything, an even broader culture for its appreciation.

ALFRED HERTZ.

October, 1915.

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CHAPTER I

BEFORE GLUCK AND MOZART

Operatic 'symptoms'; Florence; the expressive style; the figured bass—The first operas; Mantua: Monteverdi's *Orfeo*—Venice: Cavalli and Cesti; Naples and the Carissimi influence; Scarlatti and his school—Rome and the buffo element; the transition to Paris; Lully; Rameau—England and Henry Purcell; German beginnings; the Hamburg opera, Keiser; Handel and other foreign offshoots of Naples—Operatic conventions; the younger Neapolitans; Jommelli; *opera buffa*, Pergolesi, Paësiello, Piccini.

I

LIKE the discovery of America, the invention of the art-form which we call opera was the result of a delusion. The Florentine reformers who are generally supposed to be responsible for it sought the India of ancient tragedy, or, to be exact, a modern revival of it. And they found—the America of opera, lyric drama, music drama, or whatever you may wish to call it. But, far from recognizing it as a new continent, they died in the belief of having resuscitated an old world—the classic world of Æschylus and Sophocles, of Phidias and Praxiteles—the soul of ancient Greece as it seemed to whisper to their overwrought imaginations from the lifeless papyrus and the inflexible beauty of the statue. And they cursed those who, animated by a new sense of beauty—quite as classic in its conceptions, gave the new species melodic life, and endowed it with forms which alone could preserve its existence until a new expression could be evolved, so powerful and free that it could serve two ideals, the lyric and dramatic, at once.

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For the opera is a hybrid, and centuries were needed for the assimilation and reconciliation of its opposed elements. It is the paradox among art forms, the most artificial yet the most popular, now aiming at unity by the most diverse means, striving to simulate nature yet employing the most unnatural of forms, now forsaking its dramatic ideal of higher expressiveness for the empty glories of *bel canto* and the vanity of *castrati*. The entire history of opera from its inception to the advent of Gluck (and, for that matter, more or less ever since) is a record of that struggle of antagonistic elements; the dramatic against the musical (or lyrical), the expressive against the placidly beautiful, the natural against the formalistic or conventional.

A great deal of romancing has been done about the beginnings of opera. W. S. Rockstro, in an older edition of 'Grove's Dictionary,' confidently traces its origin back to the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles, whom he calls the first librettists, 'and the earliest orchestra a band of lyres and flutes.' R. A. Streatfeild, in 'The Opera,' on the other hand, straightway takes the year 1600 as the starting point, and credits the Florentine *camerata* which gathered at the house of Giovanni Bardi (and later at the Palazzo Corsi) with the origination of the idea. Both of these versions of history have had due attention in the first volume of our Narrative History, the first in Chapter IV, the second in Chapter XI. The former is more romantic, to be sure, but the latter more reasonable. Neither is exactly true. For, while the Greeks undoubtedly intoned their lines, as their bards had intoned their verses from time immemorial, and while they employed choruses accompanied by lyres or a *flute* (*aulos*) this proceeding was more in the nature of a religious rite than a dramatic expedient. And, on the other hand, while the Florentines certainly brought an essentially new form of entertainment, the fundamental idea underlying it was

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as old as the hills. For, what more natural than that the little feats of mimicry in which a part of the population of any period has indulged in, should be accompanied by a song? Did not the strolling player of the Middle Ages tell his story in song—and should he not have interspersed his clownish personations with a tune and a dance? We would perhaps be as well justified in supposing the existence of a folk-opera as ancestor to the 'art' opera, as we are in calling the folk-song the predecessor of the art song. The historically famous song-play or vaudeville, called *Li gieus de Robin et de Marion*, compiled from folk tunes by the troubadour Adam de la Hâle (1285), has not without some justification been called the first comic opera. It is at least to be regarded as an 'operatic symptom,' as Mr. W. F. Apthorp says, and an evidence of the growing desire for a musico-dramatic art form, to which the polyphonic mania of the succeeding centuries acted as a temporary bar. *Robin et Marion* was, needless to say, not the only thing of its kind.

Many other 'symptoms' might be cited. There is at any rate no doubt that the mediæval mysteries, the *sacre rappresentazioni* of Italy, the *Marienklagen* of Germany, were in effect sacred operas. Their dialogue was sung, in some cases they were accompanied by instruments, consisted of soli, ensembles, choruses and dances, and their scenic outfit (*ingegni teatrali*) was often dazzling in its opulence and astounding in its intricacy. Then there were the sumptuous ballet *intermezzi* of the Renaissance, the carnival fêtes of the Medici, the May festivals (*maggi*) of the Roman populace, and the antique pastorals of the Renaissance poets, most of which were accompanied by music of one kind or another. In Poliziano's *Orfeo* of 1547 the musical part was carried out so consistently that Mr. W. J. Henderson has called it the first real opera of record and has devoted the better part of a volume to the dis-

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cussion of it. The French court ballet of the sixteenth century, of which the famous *Circe, ou le ballet comique de la royne* (1581) is the type, was certainly incipient opera. A detailed description of this extraordinary exhibition is given in Volume I (pp. 401-404). The music, by Baltazarini (or Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx, as he called himself), member of a company of Italian fiddlers that came to Paris in 1577 and afterwards *valet de chambre* to Catherine de' Medicis, is for the most part in chord harmony, though generally devoid of tonality. It is replete with choruses and ensembles and shows even a touch of dramatic color. There are dialogues and solos in simple song-form, one tune serving for a number of stanzas. The orchestra comprised nearly all the known instruments—flutes, oboes, *Krummhorn* (curved reed instrument, ancestor of the clarinet), trumpets, cornets, sacbuts (trombones), harp, lutes, drum, organ, pan's pipe and strings in five parts! The most remarkable thing about it was, as Apthorp says, that combining, as it did, poetry, music, dancing and dramatic action (and having a consistent dramatic plot), the *Ballet de la royne* foreshadowed very nearly what the French opera was to become in centuries after. Beaujoyeulx was indeed a clairvoyant.

Romain Rolland has written a very entertaining and scholarly essay on the 'opera before the opera' in which all these incipient music dramas are discussed. In his *Origines du drame lyrique* he also discusses various ante-1600 operatic essays, in some of which, such as the dramatic madrigals of Orazio Vecchi (1551-1605) and Adriano Banchieri (1567-1634)—notably the *Amfiparnasso* of the former—the essential musico-dramatic principles are quite well developed. They had a continuous dramatic plot, and were sung by singers in costume, who, however, did not *act*. Even solo speeches were sung in several parts, contrapuntally, the non-representative singers being concealed, in the manner of an

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orchestra. (Cf. Vol. I.) But since the music of that period was so infested with the polyphonic incubus as to preclude the very idea of direct personal expression, there could be no serious attempt at a musical expression of deep emotion, pathos or tragedy.* That kind of expression was of course exactly the aim of Peri, Caccini, and the other members of the Florentine circle. They were *literati* as much as musicians; Rinuccini the poet had a large share in their deliberations. The 'musicians' of the period, who were primarily contrapuntists, the 'Goths' as Vincenzo Galileo contemptuously called them, had no sympathy with these tendencies, of course.

The one essential novelty, then, that the Florentine brought, was the 'expressive' style, the *stile rappresentativo*, in other words the 'dry recitative' (*recitativo secco*) of the Italian opera, which their successors promptly abandoned whenever they wanted to achieve a really expressive effect—that is, as soon as they discovered the wonderful charm of the human voice singing a melody over an instrumental accompaniment, of the solo voice addressing itself to an audience in all its unalloyed beauty and without the dead weight of a number of other voices singing in counterpoint against it. The theory that they invented solo singing with instrumental accompaniment (monody) outright, has, however, been exploded, for there existed, no less than three centuries before, a school of composers who cultivated just that kind of music (see Vol. I, p. 260 ff), a species that seems to have been handed down in un-

* It is a noteworthy fact that especially in Italy these madrigal plays generally took a comic direction. Alessandro Striggio of Mantua (1535-1584) writes a series of rustic scenes for four and five voices carrying the listener through the various occurrences of a village day; scenes of village gossip and scandal, servants' complaints of their masters, bickerings and hand-to-hand fights of washerwomen, reconciliation, kisses and sunset. Giovanni Croce of Chioggia (1550-1609) sets the whole Venetian carnival to music often with no little realistic *vis comica*.—W. F. Apthorp: 'Opera Past and Present' (N. Y., 1910), p. 8.

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broken succession from the troubadours—perhaps from the ancient bards—and to which the madrigalists of the sixteenth century were slowly groping their way back.*

But we must not rob the inventors of opera of all their credit. The service they rendered to music by cultivating the melodic style—monody, as it is technically called—is incalculable in its effect upon the development of art. It revolutionized musical thinking, it established harmony as we now conceive it, it clarified style (though impoverishing it at first), and it laid the foundation of the classic forms, which are essentially harmonic conceptions. Moreover the Florentines were the real originators of the modern orchestra as the accompanying instrument to the human voice. By establishing this relationship they opened up a world of possibilities—dynamic possibilities, color possibilities, dramatic possibilities—which centuries have not sufficed to exploit. Nothing has developed the resources of the orchestra so much as the demands of drama. From Monteverdi's tremolo to the harp glissando that accompanies Klingsor's spear, dramatic necessity has lain at the bottom of nearly every new 'effect.'

Thus, although the Florentines are not the inventors of the musico-dramatic principle, though they are not the originators of monody, and though their revival of the Greek tragedy was a delusion, they are still the originators of a new art-form, and the inaugurators of a new epoch—the epoch of the Figured Bass, as Riemann calls it. For that is the most characteristic outward sign of their music—the employment of a simple bass with figures to indicate the harmonies that are to be

* We have pointed out in the 'Narrative History' how gradually the custom grew to have only one part of the madrigal sung and the rest played on instruments, and how little by little the upper voice asserted its melodic rights. Originally the tenor carried the *cantus firmus*, or principal melody, and not the treble. Strictly speaking, there was no principal melody at all—all the parts being of equal importance in this 'horizontal' music.

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combined with it. This is the very antithesis of the music of the preceding age, with its polyphonic intricacy. Its combinations are so simple and so inevitable that the disposition of the voices may be left to the performers. It is an empirical and, as we now view it, natural style, as against a 'scientific' and highly artificial one. By a more and more extended use of the modern major and minor modes, evidently based upon a natural preference, people had come to feel melodies in their natural harmonic relations. They had unconsciously discovered the close dependence of all melodic periods upon two or three degrees of the scale, and this in turn had influenced their melodic invention so that all their tunes could easily move back and forth between the first and fifth degrees (tonic and dominant) as bases, with an occasional shift to the fourth (subdominant). This of course implies monotony in place of the great variety of the polyphonic school and its modal resources, but upon this simple foundation the entire structure of our modern harmonic system, with its infinite variety of dissonance, was to be erected. Although a new kind of polyphony (possessing an essentially harmonic significance and vitality) has since been developed, music has never again been conceived as a combination of horizontal lines, but always as a continuous series of vertical units of harmony. Hence the apt designation of the old polyphony as horizontal music, and the modern harmonic music as vertical. The Florentine monodists were the introducers of the latter style into professional or art music and therefore the real founders of the new era.

The orchestra which supplied the accompaniment of the first operas—which filled in the figured bass of the 'score'—consisted of a harpsichord, a *chitarone*, a *lira grande*, or *viol da gamba*, and a *theorbo* (large lute). In some of the '*ritornelli*' three flutes were added. This orchestra, according to contemporary accounts, played

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behind the scenes. At the first performance of *Euridice* Signor Corsi, the noble host, himself presided at the harpsichord, with three of his friends assisting him. Similar combinations served for the other operas of the Florentine period (which by the way were called *dramma in musica* or *favolo in musica*). Monteverdi and his successors increased the number of instruments and brought into use combinations that more nearly resemble our modern orchestra, but it is significant that the use of the harpsichord as the centre of the band persisted to the time of Gluck (in the symphonic orchestra as well), usually serving as the only accompaniment to the *recitative secco*. That the orchestra of the Italian opera did not for a long time get far away from its original traditions is indicated by Wagner's jocose description of it as a 'big guitar.'

II

Let us pass the early operatic essays in rapid review. Properly speaking, Galilei's *Il Conte Ugolino*, a cantata for solo voice accompanied by one instrument, which has, however, not been preserved, was the original experiment. (Still earlier there are recorded three musico-dramatic productions—*Il Satiro*, *La Disperazione di Fileno*, 1590, and *Il Giuoco della Cieca*, 1595, by Emilio de' Cavalieri, the creator of the oratorio, and no less than eight others dating from between 1569 and 1582, by various composers including Claudio Merulo, none of which were, however, animated by the new spirit.)* The *Dafne* of Jacopo Peri, properly the first

* There is some doubt about Cavalieri, who *may* have employed the *stile rappresentativo*, since Peri refers to him as the master who first 'brought our music upon the stage.' But it is not likely. Cavalieri was not a member of the *camerata* and the term 'our music' may be without significance. At any rate the evidence is irretrievably lost. Were the music preserved, it might establish Cavalieri to be the real creator of the opera, as well as of the oratorio.

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opera, was produced in 1597 before a private assembly at the Palazzo Corsi. It was written, at the instance of Rinuccini, the author of the text, 'to test the effect' of the new (or supposedly ancient) kind of melody. Its manuscript is lost. The *Euridice*, the score of which is extant, came next, being performed at the marriage festivities of Henri IV and Maria de' Medici in 1600. Rinuccini again was the librettist and several noblemen participated in the performance. Caccini's work of the same name was published, with a dedication to Count Bardi, in the same year, and another work, *Il Rapimento di Cefalo*, which Caccini was commissioned to produce for the Medici nuptials, also dates from this time. The furore with which these works were received has been amply noted by historians. The new art form had now gained recognition and its practicability was tried by experiment. The spirit of classical antiquity, which it was supposed to emulate, assured its acceptance as a legitimate product of the Renaissance and that spirit pervaded at least the texts of most of the operas for some time to come.

It dedicated the subjects of the first operas of the Mantuan period which now followed, the *Dafne* (1608) of Marco da Gagliano and the *Orfeo* (1607) and *Arianna* (1608) of Claudio Monteverdi. Both of these were commissioned by the Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga for the festivities incident to the marriage of his son Francesco, to Margherita, Infanta of Savoy. The first we have already mentioned. In facture it shows no great advance over the Florentine operas but there is a much freer melody with more lyrical portions, a distinct drift toward the aria. Bie * mentions its chorus, *Odi il pianto*, as one of the most wonderful of its kind, alternating in four and two parts, of 'melancholy beauty,' serving as *ritornello* after a true *cantilena* solo. The score is preserved and reprinted in part of Eitner's

* Oskar Bie: *Die Oper*, 1913.

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collection (*Die Oper*).^{*} Of *Arianna* we have only the famous 'Lament' (See Musical Examples, Vol. XIII), almost all the rest of the opera being lost to us. We know from contemporary accounts that it moved the audience to tears and that it became the most popular 'operatic selection' or perhaps the most popular piece of music for generations. In every Italian household that boasted a lute 'Ariadne's Lament' was sung. And to-day, whenever a singer unearths it as a concert curiosity, the would-be scoffer remains to pray. For its chaste melodic beauty, its fine dramatic breadth, the poignancy of its ninths (Monteverdi's harmonic innovation) still exert their power.

The work of Monteverdi that has come down to us in its entirety, the *Orfeo* of 1607, marks an epoch in the history of opera. Its story has been the favorite for musical treatment since Poliziano's *favolo*, the same that Peri and Caccini chose for their great effort and the same that another great reformer was to choose over a hundred years later. The poet of Monteverdi's version is unknown. In Monteverdi the opera found its first master. Not only was he a musician of learning (his polyphonic crudities and harmonic vagaries are signs of strength rather than weakness) but he possessed real genius for dramatic effect. This dramatic instinct, together with his inventive powers and vigorous imagination, caused him to break the narrow bounds of harmonic law (for harmonic procedure had become closely prescribed), and he freely introduced unprepared dissonance, as well as the use of the chord of the ninth, the greatest musical asset to dramatic expression down to Wagner. The same adventurousness led him to introduce such special orchestral effects as the pizzicato and the tremolo. (Noted in Vol. VII, etc.) The latter was incidental to the development of the

^{*} In the series *Publikation älterer theoretischer und praktischer Musikwerke*, Vol. X.

Facsimile of the Title-page of Caccini's Euridice (1600)



MONTEVERDI'S 'ORFEO'

placid and somewhat heavy *stile rappresentativo* into the *stile concitato* (emotional style) in which the accompaniment was allowed to take its own rhythm and reiterate notes as many times as the degree of excitement demanded, instead of merely holding them.

With Monteverdi, indeed, the operatic orchestra has its beginning. Monteverdi himself was a skillful violist and had a fancy for instrumental composition (of which his Florentine predecessors knew nothing). Thus he could venture to bring together a greater variety of instruments, while his technical skill enabled him to turn their resources to very good account. His first orchestra included 2 *gravicembali* (early form of piano), 2 double basses, 10 *viole da brazza* (violas), 1 double harp, 2 violins ('*alla francese*'), 2 large guitars, 2 wood pipe-organs, 3 'cellos, 4 trombones, 1 regale (reed-organ), 2 cornetti (*Zinken*, trumpets), 1 small flute, and 1 high trumpet with three muted trumpets—a goodly array. In characteristically fanciful manner the composer has, in his *dramatis personæ*, attached each character to an instrument or group of instruments (see Vol. I, p. 342), though from the score it does not appear that any real attempt has been made at deriving any dramatic significance from this association. All in all it is true that the works of Monteverdi, in truth of expression, in harmonic vigor and in orchestral color, constitute the foundation of all operatic composition.

We have already dwelled upon the musical qualities of *Orfeo* in our sketch of Monteverdi in Vol. I (p. 341 f.). Let the student examine the score in Eitner's collection * and marvel at its ingenuities and its curious forebodings. The first vocal movement in triplex or ternary form, typical of the *aria*, and the first dramatic duets are, be it noted, to be found in *Orfeo*. The recitatives of *Orfeo*, while sometimes accompanied only by a figured bass, frequently require the coöperation of

* See above.

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two or more definite instruments, which are indicated by the composer at the beginning. A similar scheme was followed out in Monteverdi's next serious dramatic attempt—*Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*—which he wrote in 1624, after settling in Venice, the city which henceforth became the centre of operatic development, though both Rome and Bologna cultivated opera in a manner since the first decade of the seventeenth century.

Combattimento is historically notable for the introduction of the orchestral effects noted above. It is written as an 'intermezzo' and its significance otherwise is slight. The *Proserpina rapita* of 1630 was soon forgotten over the plague, but *L'Adone*, produced in the first public opera house (founded by Benedetto Ferrari, the theorbo player, and Francesco Manelli di Tivoli, the composer), seems to have had a regular 'run,' being performed till the carnival of 1640. In 1641 *Arianna* was revived in another public theatre devoted to opera, the Teatro di San Marco. After some less important works Monteverdi rounded out his task with *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1642), which has been called by Kretzschmar the most significant dramatic work of the seventeenth century. But from it the antique classic spirit has quite departed. It is a story of intrigue playing in Nero's time, a 'mixture of indolence, characterization, buffo episodes, slumber songs, erotic ecstasy, sudden dramaticism, solemn triad-edict and virtuososo coloratura'—a copious foreshadowing of what Italian opera was to become.

Opera quickly became popular in Venice. Hitherto only princes had been vouchsafed the pleasure of so expensive an entertainment, but the transfer of the privileges to the people was nothing short of clairvoyance. Before the close of the century Venice had no less than eleven theatres devoted exclusively to the performance of opera. Other cities, of course, soon fol-

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lowed suit and opera has not ceased to be, to this day, the national amusement of Italy.

III

It is curious to see how the purely 'musical' element—antagonistic to the purposes of the Florentines—crept even into their earliest creations. Peri's *Euridice* of 1600, the earliest opera extant, shows practically nothing but the simple recitative over a figured bass, which was called the *stile parlante*, the declamatory style calculated to simulate natural declamation so closely that it might pass for heightened speech (as he imagined the Greeks employed it). But already some passages, as if in spite of their composer, become more melodious than others; the short choral passages that break into the recitatives are of necessity rhythmical and in *Orfeo's* return aria (shall we call it so?) there are the germinal beginnings of song construction. Caccini, Peri's friend and rival, who set some of the *Euridice* and then did the entire thing over again on his own account, already writes a more plastic melody, and, being first and foremost a singer and a teacher of the art of *bel canto*, he does not disdain even *coloratura*. What a contradiction for the advocate of the *stile rappresentativo*, the expressive style, as he boastfully called it! But think of the beautiful voice he had, probably more expressive than the 'style,' and certainly as capable of moving his hearers to tears. Coloratura was, by the way, quite an ancient form of melody, and may well have seemed indispensable even to a Florentine reformer.* In Gagliano's *Dafne* of 1608 this florid

* Cf. Vol. V, pp. 39 ff. It is recorded by Pietro della Valle, writing in 1640, that Vittoria Archilei, the first operatic prima donna, who sang *Dafne* in Peri's opera, 'ornamented the written monody with long flourishes and turns (*lunghe giri e gruppi*) which disfigured it, but were much in fashion.' He even avers that 'the singer Peri praises them highly' (!)—an almost unbelievable inconsistency.

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melody assumed a new sort of expressiveness. Apollo's aria, for instance, is remarkable for its supple *florituri*, and again for the incipient song form with its three identical beginnings. Here, too, are choral refrains with motivistic allusions, rhythmic repetition, and instrumental interludes (*ritornelli*), alternating with the soli and choruses that are the real beginnings of operatic formalism, of the formalism that was to lead to stereotyped convention.

With Francesco Cavalli,* Monteverdi's pupil, begins the dramatic 'degeneration' of opera—the degeneration that was inevitable if the opera was to be developed. Cavalli and Cesti departed from the tradition and spirit of the earlier opera by employing freely a more rhythmic form of melody. In their works the demands of the singer are already felt. Monteverdi had used rhythmic melody in his *ritornelli* and in his choruses, the more formal pieces in which the 'expressive style' did not figure. Why should not the soloist have the benefit of a freer melody also and the effect of a well-rounded musical form? Hence the choruses shrink, the solos grow, less importance is attached to the meaning of the verses, more and more to 'effect'; the voice employs its entire range, it alternates with the orchestra, repeats, cultivates beauty of tone, agility, it dominates more and more the course of the action. Opulent display, glittering show, gradually take the place of real drama, as the voice and melody usurp the oral attention. The dry recitative, now clearly set off against the *cantilena* portions, becomes drier than ever, pathos becomes stereotyped, and gradually drifts to its ultimate position as the mortar that holds the bricks—the solo pieces—together. It is the natural striving for *form*, which the musical drama, like every species of art, demands. And the pendulum must swing wide to both sides before it can find its mean.

* Pier-Francesco Caletti-Bruni, nick-named *Il Checco Ca-Cavalli*.

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Cavalli foreshadowed the form of the regular aria, the form which the *cantilena* portions were to assume. The return to the first part, after an alternating section, which is the essential feature of the form, is already made by him, though he did not use the term *da capo*, which Scarlatti later introduced in order to save the trouble of writing the first part twice. He was a musician of real talent, capable of genuine, sincere, broad expression and emotional emphasis, and of imbuing his melodies with fiery passion. He is said to have written over forty operas and about half that number have been preserved. Nearly all of them were produced in Venice. His most famous work is *Giasone*, rich in spontaneous melody and replete with what Bie calls his 'virtuosity of emotion.' He had a genius for the brilliant summing-up—for presenting the gist of a dramatic situation in a musical phrase. 'There is something Wagnerish in the heroic pomp of his style; more Wagnerish still is his glowing picturesque imaginativeness,' says Apthorp. 'He for the first time brought something of the popular song into opera; his fondness for simple, concise, melodic forms is conspicuous. He welcomed the laughable personage upon the lyric stage, and treated him musically with consummate mastery. A born son of the people, he was just the man to give convincing expression to the popular spirit.' The introduction of the comic or *buffo* element into serious opera (which Apthorp dates roughly from Cavalli's *Dericlea* of 1645) is of prime importance. Almost coinciding with the advent of the real comic opera, the *opera buffa*, from another quarter, it marks the beginning of the rivalry of the two forms, in which the comic had the better of it—in point of popularity—from the start.

The definite separation of the two elements into the *opera seria* on the one hand and the *opera buffa* on the other came with Cavalli's younger rival, Cesti.

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Marc'Antonio Cesti (ca. 1620-1669) was a pupil of the great *maestro*, Giacomo Carissimi, of Rome. Carissimi's is the second great name in the development of the oratorio, and, like his predecessor *Cavaleri*, he was not without influence upon the history of opera. Indeed, recent scholarship attributes to that influence—communicated by Cesti, for *Carissimi* himself did not write for the stage—all the baneful results of the next century, the degeneration of the opera into a 'concert in costume.' Musically the influence was nothing but good. Carissimi was a master of form and left his mark upon all existent or incipient concert forms of the day. But these forms were utterly undramatic, and therefore, while they served the purposes of the oratorio well enough, lifting it above the level of a mere biblical show, their introduction into the opera was bound to degrade it and turn it away from the classic principles of the Florentines.

Cesti, by applying the methods of phrasing and orchestration employed by Carissimi in the *cantata da camera*, certainly raised the opera to a higher level of musical worth. His *L'Orontea* was produced in Venice in the same year as his rival Cavalli's *Giasone* (1649) and was popular in Italy for three decades. Six of his later operas were written for Vienna. His *Serse* was composed for the wedding of Louis XIV in 1660. 'Those of his operas which remain to us,' says Streatfeild, '*La Dori* and *Le Disgrazie d'amore*, show a far greater command of orchestral and vocal resource than Monteverdi or Cavalli could boast, but so far as real expression and sincerity are concerned, they are inferior to the less cultivated efforts of the earlier musicians.' Among Cesti's contemporaries of the Venetian school we should mention, for the sake of completeness, Giovanni Legrenzi, Antonio Sartorio, Carlo Pallavicino, and Pietro and Marc'Antonio Ziani. In their works the 'oratorio influence' grew apace. However baneful the effects of

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this influence were, they found a most ready acceptance with the public, and especially the singers.

With the advent of Alessandro Scarlatti the scene shifts to Naples. He is generally considered the founder of the Neapolitan school, though that title more properly belongs to Francesco Provenzale (b. 1610), 'a consummate master of the serio-comic style with, however, a strong leaning toward the tragic.'* Upon the head of Scarlatti and his followers has been heaped the entire blame for the subsequent degeneration of the opera. But what Scarlatti did was simply to acknowledge boldly what was already being done. By dint of his superior ability he established the *aria* firmly as the opera's chief ingredient. His musicianly love for symmetrical design led him to adopt the *da capo* form consistently—that is, a first section followed by a contrasting second, after which the first is repeated—a very satisfactory expedient musically (and, as we have seen elsewhere, bound to have an important influence upon instrumental music) but inimical to the dramatic principle, which holds *progressive* action to be of prime importance. To see a prima donna tell her story in the first verse, expatiate upon it or vent her grief over it in the second and then deliberately go back and tell it all over to the same tune is dramatically absurd. But it was mighty effective for a singer with a marvelous voice to go back, say, after a minor section full of dark pathos or ominous tragedy, to a beautifully lyric major that lingered in the ears of her audience—especially when she could trim it up with the most deliciously fluent *florituri* and a brilliant cadenza at the end! And after all the singer was the most important item of the show. *Bel canto*, the art that gave him a

* Mr. Apthorp calls Provenzale 'one of the greatest and most forgotten geniuses in the history of opera.' Romain Rolland suggests his identity with Francesco della Torre, who is better known as the composer of *Alessandro Bala* (1678). Provenzale's operas include *La Stelidaura vendicata* (1670) and *Il schiavo di sua moglie* (1671).

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command over his instrument, had become the marvel of the age. The people were thoroughly alive to its merits and the plaudits they bestowed for special feats of brilliance were like the acclaim of a victor in the arena of an earlier age. And after all, as Ernest Newman says, this taste for superlatively beautiful singing was simply the assertion of a healthy instinct. The naturalistic spirit of the people delighting in the simple pleasures of the theatre demanded a reaction from the unnatural style of the Florentine opera—'this bastard growth, this offspring of weak modernity upon misunderstood antiquity.' It was a degeneration none the less,—inevitable, as we have said, and perhaps directly the result of the popularization of the opera. The enterprise of the manager, too, was an important cause. Pecuniary lack made him seize one great attraction that was comparatively cheap and abandon the other which was expensive—hence he exalted vocal display over dramatically essential scenic effects and the 'concert opera' was the result. This was the victory of the singer over the composer and Naples was the scene of this victory.

It is fortunate, perhaps, at this juncture, that there was at hand as fine a composer as Scarlatti. Scarlatti was first of all a skilled contrapuntist. The science which his operatic confrères held in contempt he studied with assiduity, and consequently he could give to his basses a strength and impart to his accompaniments a variety which exalted the quality of his music far above theirs. It is to be noted that, besides his 115 operas (of which we know 87 by their titles), he composed no less than 200 masses and an almost incredible number of other works, including a number of oratorios. (Quantz asserts that he, too, was a pupil of Carissimi.) Besides his definite fixing of the aria form, Scarlatti is responsible for the specialization of the recitative, of which he distinguished two kinds—the

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recitativo secco and the *recitativo stromentato* (accompanied recitative). The former was the simple declamatory style, usually supported by a figured bass harmony, then played upon the harpsichord, and was used for the ordinary business of the stage, the latter a passionate form of declamation, in which the sense of the verbal text is enforced by the continual interposition of orchestral symphonies of more or less elaborate construction. In conjunction with these the aria was used for impassioned, or strongly individualized soliloquy. The 'accompanied recitative' was the borderland between the two extremes, the seed ground out of which was to grow eventually the modern style of dramatic arioso.

Scarlatti made his operatic début in Rome in 1679 with *L'Errore innocente* and in the following year he produced *L'Onesta nell' amore* in the Roman palace of the ex-Queen Christine of Sweden, whose *maestro di capella* he was until 1684. Among his later operas the most important were: *La Rosaura* (1690); *Teodora* (1693), in which he first introduced the *da capo*; *Pirro e Demetrio* (Naples, 1693); *Il Prigioniero fortunato* (1698); *Laodicea e Berenice* (1701); *Tigrane* (1715), and *Griselda* (1721). The orchestra of *Tigrane* is worthy of note for its modern proportions: violins, violas, 'cellos, double basses, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons and 2 horns.

Alessandro Stradella and Luigi Rossi are the most important among Scarlatti's Neapolitan contemporaries. Of the former's operas only the libretto of one, *La forza dell' amor paterna* (the music of which may not have been composed), is preserved. But his style is apparent from several oratorios and a number of cantatas which justify the supposition that he would have become the founder of a highly characteristic school but for his untimely death. This was the result of a romance, which is worth relating, since Flotow subsequently made it the subject of an opera.

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Stradella was commissioned to write an opera for Venice, there fell in love with the daughter of a noble Venetian and eloped with her before the performance of his work. Her lover was so wroth over the affair that he vowed Stradella's death. After escaping assassination in Rome and Turin, Stradella fell victim to his enemy in Genoa, probably in 1681. Rossi, though a native of Naples, earned his success chiefly in Rome, where he was musician to Cardinal Barberini. To him attaches the honor of having written the first opera upon French soil.

Another prominent contemporary was Antonio Lotti, who produced eighteen successful operas for Venice, one for Vienna and three for Dresden, where he stayed during 1717-1719 upon special invitation of the prince elector. Riemann calls him 'one of the most remarkable artistic personalities of his time, and 'an honorable representative of the Venetian school, even more upon the field of church music than that of dramatic composition.' Antonio Caldara (1670-1736) also belongs to the Venetian school with his seventy-four operas and serenades, and like Lotti he branched out to Vienna, where he was the second kapellmeister of the opera for a time. In Bologna we must note Antonio Perti, Francesco Pistocchi and Giovanni Maria Buononcini, the rival of Handel in London; and in Vincenza, Domenico Freschi, who is chiefly known in history for his *Berenice*, which seems to have been as much of a circus and menagerie as an opera (cf. Vol. I, p. 377). The Barnums of seventeenth-century opera apparently achieved wonders in catering to the desire for cheap show and at the same time propitiating the precious singers. Pistocchi's *Leandre* (1679) and *Girello* (1682) were actually performed by mechanical puppets while the singers were hidden behind the scenes!

Among Scarlatti's personal pupils, carrying out the

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tendencies of the Neapolitan school, the foremost are Leonardo Leo (1694-1744), whose dramatic compositions exceed sixty in number and who is to be noted for his careful musical workmanship, Francesco Durante (1684-1755), who, however, was also much influenced by the Roman school (of which presently), and Francesco Feo (1685-1740). Nicola Porpora, more justly famous as a great teacher of *bel canto*, though he also wrote a great number of operas, belongs to this generation of the Neapolitan school, as do also Gaetano Greco (b. 1680) and his pupil Leonardo Vinci (1690-1732). The last-named wrote forty-one operas, of which *Ifigenia in Tauride* and *Astanietta* (1725) were extremely successful. Bie points to his 'plastic accompagnati'* as an element of progress toward the reforms of Gluck. Further elements of reform are to be noted in the younger Italians, Jommelli, Traetta, Piccini, Sacchini and Majò, of whom later.

IV

Let us retrace our steps and for a moment consider conditions in Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century. We remember that Cavalieri, the creator of the oratorio, was a Roman and produced his *Rappresentazione dell' anima e di corpo* there in 1600. We remember, too, that Rome, the papal capital, was the centre of the more austere church music, the home of the great Palestrina (as against Venice, the home of Willaert, cultivating the more popular, coloristic type). Hence we shall find the work of the Roman opera composers more strongly imbued with the ecclesiastical spirit and leaning more decidedly to polyphony and ensemble forms than that of the Venetians and Neapolitans, which was directly based upon the empirical school of the Florentines. Cavalieri's work, in effect

* Accompanied recitatives, cf. above.

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a sacred opera (for, though performed in a church, it was acted in costume), was followed in 1606 by an allegorical pastoral by Agazzari, entitled *Eumelio*, and in 1619 by Stefano Landi's *Orfeo*. Cardinals and future popes are concerned with the cultivation of the new art. Rospigliosi, afterward Pope Clement IX, wrote the text for Landi's *San Alessio*, and this was performed in the palace of Cardinal Barberini, henceforth the home of Roman opera and the centre of its school. But a decided, inherent tendency to the comic seems to have offset this ecclesiastical atmosphere. Both of Landi's works are tragi-comic (the drinking song of Charon in *Orfeo* is one of the earliest *buffo* arias known), and, indeed, the future pope himself, who wrote quite a number of opera texts, was instrumental in the creation of *opera buffa*. In 1639 he wrote *Che soffre, sperì*, set to music by Mazzocchi and Marazzoli, and in 1654 *Dal mal il bene*—both vigorously rustic comic operas.

The operas of the Roman composers were, as we have said, more polyphonic, more instrumental as a natural consequence, rich in chamber symphonies, and containing formal instrumental pieces akin to the dance forms of the French ballets. Hence it seems quite natural that Paris should have received its first real opera from Rome, whence Cardinal Mazarin summoned Rossi in 1646. He went with a train of twenty musicians, including eight *castrati*, and in 1647 his *Orfeo* was performed (with a prologue to His Most Christian Majesty) at the Palais Royal. Two years earlier, however, a company of Italians had given before the queen at the Petit Palais de Bourbon the *Finta pazza* of Saccati, a five-act comedy with songs and dialogue. In 1646, too, an attempt at native French opera was made at the palace of Cardinal Alessandro Bichi, bishop of Carpentras and apostolic nuncio of Urban VIII. This was *Achebar, roi du Mogol*, a musical tragedy, text and

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music by Abbé Mailly, the cardinal's secretary. Several more sporadic attempts were made to introduce Italian opera, but with little success. The French, unlike the Germans (who welcomed Italian opera with open arms), rejected the Italian texts and had no appreciation of the Italian music. Their own dramatic traditions and academic doctrines were too strongly rooted. National pride also played its share, and when in 1659 Lully and Cambert produced privately their *Pastorale en musique* or *Opéra d'Issy*, which was supposed to be modelled upon the classic lines of the Florentines, they met with such success that the performance had to be repeated publicly. Agitation for a national French opera independent of the Italian—and perchance superior to it—was rife. Cavalli's *Serse* and *Ercole amante*, produced by the composer upon the invitation of Cardinal Mazarin in 1660 and 1662, were failures in Paris.

It was the irony of fate that the true French opera in a national sense should have for its founder an Italian: Giovanni Battista Lulli, known to history as Jean-Baptiste Lully, being naturalized in 1661. For, whatever importance may be attached to the physical foundation of the *Académie de musique* by Pierre Perrin, the poet, and Robert Cambert, the musician, in 1671, the first production of these ambitious gentlemen was of no importance whatever, either dramatically or musically. It was a pastoral in five acts with a prologue and its title, *Pomone*, may be recorded here for the sake of completeness. Moreover, the very year after its establishment the Academy passed into Lully's hands. By means of intrigue he got the concession away from Perrin and company, and by royal patent secured a monopoly of operatic production for himself. Lully was one of the shrewdest opportunists that ever lived. A gradual rise from the position of scullion in the service of Mademoiselle de Montpensier to that of

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maitre de musique to his majesty, Louis XIV, had nimbled his wits as well as his fingers. With a very keen sense of perception he saw 'what a deal of French spirit was latent in the representation, declamation, fondness for show and the dance fascination of the opera.' Moreover, he knew exactly what to choose, what to leave out and what to add to the Venetian school of Cavalli, which doubtless influenced him as did also the formalistic tendency of Carissimi. Had he not written *airs de ballet* for the court long enough to know that his majesty's courtiers could not dispense with his delicious dance tunes for one evening? Thus he awakened opera to its rhythmic consciousness. And did not the whole monumental brilliance, the courtly gravity of processions and the glitter of gay confusion dictate to him the retention of the chorus, which the Italians had abandoned? Was it not evident that ballets and prologues in the manner of court reverences must become fixed qualities of French opera? And finally, did not the tragic accents and the rhythmic qualities of the French language demand a new style of recitative? In this respect he accomplished a task parallel to that of the Florentines. He devised a style of musical declamation in conformity with the heroic metre and the stiff convention and the linguistic pride of the French tragedy. With equally good sense he omitted *coloratura* and in fine achieved a stylistic reaction in favor of poetry. He avoided word repetitions and prolonged vocalization, and varied his rhythms to follow the dictates of the text. His style is simple, stately to the extent of being tiresome. Dramatically it is true, sincere; and a certain scenic quality is never absent from it. He became the demigod of French music, the favorite of the Academic pedants no less than of royalty. He became to opera what Racine and Corneille were to the drama. Philippe Quinault, the dramatic poet, was his collaborator, while he himself acted the

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parts of composer, ballet master, machinist, conductor, as well as coach of singers and dancers—all with marvellous ability and energy. His choleric temper and his sarcastic humor, which did not spare even the person of the king, are historic.

The instrumental portions assumed a greater importance in Lully's operas. The French overture—the form of which (a slow, stately movement followed by a rapid one in *fugato* style) he originated—took the place of the negligible Italian *sinfonia*. His orchestra, as a matter of course, achieved more dignified proportions—in fact the entire opera in all its parts became 'monumentalized in the direction of Gluck.' His vogue lasted to the days of Gluck and established the French operatic tradition for well-nigh two centuries.

The titles of Lully's most important operas are these: *Les fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus* (1672); *Cadmus et Hermione* (1673); *Alceste* (1675); *Thésée* (1675); *Atys* (1676); *Isis* (1677); *Psyché* (1678); *Bellerophon* (1679); *Proserpine* (1680); *Persée* (1682); *Phaëton* (1683); *Amadis de Gaule* (1684); *Roland* (1685); *Armide et Renaud* (1686); and *Acis et Galatée* (1687). *Armide* and *Thésée* are the most famous. *Armide's* aria 'Venez, haine implacable,' is especially powerful. *Isis*, regarded by contemporaries as next to the other two the finest 'opéra des musiciens,' is remarkable for the finely expressive dialogues between Jupiter and Juno and between Jupiter and Io, and the remarkably free aria of Hierax in Act III, foreshadowing the passionate *accompagnati* of a later period. Original pastorals of antique flavor, with two obbligato flutes, are a feature of *Isis*. In *Alceste* there is a touching dialogue between the dying Admetus and the weeping Alcestis, and in *Armide* there is the soft, dreamy slumber aria of Rinaldo. These are isolated beauties, which, if they could be compressed into one work, would still please, but a whole opera of Lully would to-day be an interminable

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bore. To Louis XIV and his court they were the highest and most brilliant form of entertainment. *Tempora mutantur!*

No rival arose, or was allowed to arise during Lully's reign. Colasse, Danchet, Campra, Destouches, his successors, were unable to cope with his reputation. Except for the name of Jean-Philippe Rameau, French opera would have languished entirely until the advent of another foreigner, and we should be spared the further mention of this school until our chapter on Gluck. Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) on the whole upheld the Lully tradition. He is much more important as an instrumental composer than as a dramatic one. He did not turn to opera till he was fifty and what he brought to it was purely musical. As a musician he far surpassed Lully in equipment; in some respects he is the father of modern harmony. But he cared little about his texts and about real dramatic effect. It is in the fineness of his musical texture, the charm of his melodies, the varieties of his harmonies, that he excels. In Bie's words, if Lully is the founder of the 'Versailles' of opera, Rameau is that of the 'Trianon.'

In Rameau's operas we find again the formal aria of the Italians, the *da capo* adjusted to the demands of French drama. The G minor aria of Abramane in Act IV of *Zoroastre*, the aria of Pollux, '*Ah laisse moi percer jusqu'aux sombre bords*' and Jupiter's heroic address at the end of *Castor et Pollux* are formal pieces, but tersely dramatic in spirit. But in his choruses and dance movements Rameau achieves the highest level of that formal pathos. The underworld in *Zoroastre* is grandiosely pictured in ensembles of demons and in *Castor* there is a mourning scene that foreshadows Gluck's *Orfeo* with its mysterious, subdued lyricism. The dances, separate from the operas, still delight our ears with their soft melodic lines, their pathetic, spir-

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itual grace, their lovely rhythms. There is a charming color, a soft half-light about the music of Rameau that accords well with the impressionism of our time. No wonder a Debussy is moved to write an *Hommage à Rameau*.

V

It would be well for the continuity of our narrative to pass on to the succeeding fortunes of French opera leading up to the reforms of Gluck. It is necessary, however, to dwell a moment upon the spread of opera into England and Germany and the growing domination of the musical world by the later Neapolitan school, which effectually crushed out any nationalistic impulses that may have been stirring in these two countries. France was the only country whose national pride in matters of art was sufficiently developed to offer an effective resistance to this wave of conquest and so preserve its own national school, even though largely by the aid of foreigners. Germany, though producing the greatest musical geniuses of the age, was practically ruled by Italian standards until the advent of Weber and the Romantic Movement, and England to this day has not recovered from the eclipse of its artistic individuality.

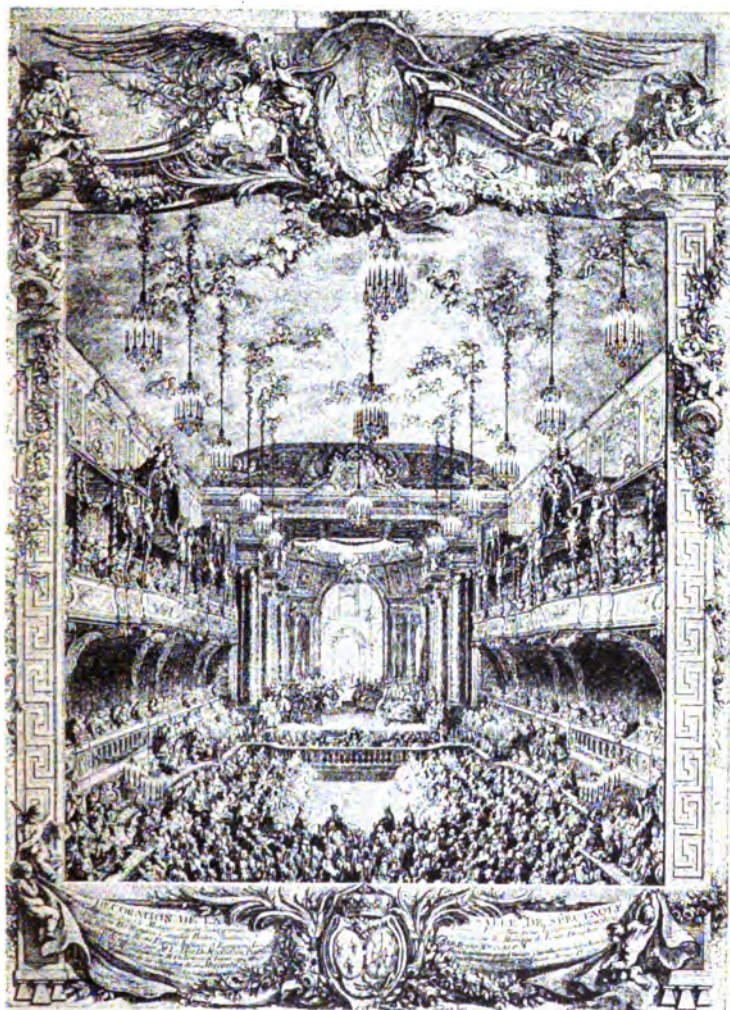
Yet England, during the period described in the preceding section, produced a genius whose one truly operatic effort entitles him to a rank with, and perhaps above, any of his contemporaries. Henry Purcell's 'Dido and Æneas' stands as the solitary monument to one who, had he been permitted to do so, might have founded a great national school. In general design this work is undoubtedly indebted to the model of Lully and its musical style was largely influenced by that of the Italians whom Purcell admired so much. But in musical quality and in genuineness of feeling

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it surpasses both its models. Its recitative is of a more natural plasticity than Lully's, though no less correct rhetorically. Purcell's melodies are far more spontaneous than those of his Italian contemporaries and have in them more than a touch of genuine national character. His superior musicianship is always in evidence, in the skillful construction of his movements, the variety of his harmonies and ingenuity of his voice leadings. In Dido's death song, which has been called one of the most pathetic scenes ever written, there is a beautiful example of his use of a 'ground-bass'—a gloomy chromatic passage constantly repeated in the bass, with ever changing harmonies in the violins. 'This,' Streatfeild says, 'paints such a picture of blank despair of a broken heart as Wagner himself, with his immense orchestral resources, has never surpassed.'

Purcell was born in London about 1658 and died there in 1695. He studied with Pelham Humfrey, who had studied with Lully in Paris, and according to Pepys had come back 'an absolute Monsieur.' Purcell himself heard none of Lully's operas performed, though he may have seen printed scores of *Thésée*, *Atys*, and *Isis*, perhaps also some of Cavalli's. His own 'Dido' was produced probably in 1679 or 1680, when the composer was about twenty-one. Its libretto was written by Nahum Tate, the poet laureate, and follows Virgil's *Æneid* except for the addition of a sorceress and a chorus of witches, who, bent on Dido's destruction, send a messenger in the guise of Mercury to Æneas to hasten his departure. Besides this opera Purcell wrote a quantity of dramatic music in the shape of overtures and incidental music to masques and plays. Some of these are even called 'operas' on the title page, and resemble operas in spots, for sometimes the text of a scene will be wholly or partly set to music, and with considerable display of genius. Such are 'Timon of Athens,' 'Bonduca,' and 'King Arthur.' This was

Operatic Performance in Versailles, 1745
After an old engraving



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evidently more to the taste of the English public of the time, educated to the enjoyment of masques since the days of Queen Elizabeth. The masque has indeed been called the ancestor of English opera, though with little justice. Such examples as the Italian Nicolo Lanieri's setting of an entire masque by Ben Jonson in the *stile recitativo* (evidently the 'expressive style' of the Florentines) in 1617, and Henry Lawes' music for 'Comus' (1634) are worth mentioning. Purcell did not live to repeat his one operatic experiment and English opera died there. The Italian oratorio-opera, as represented by Handel, blotted out its memory.

The first German opera was an accident. Martin Opitz, the German poet, was commissioned by the Elector of Saxony to translate Rinuccini's *Dafne* with a view to performing it in Dresden with Peri's music. But Opitz did not manage to make his version fit the music, so the elector asked Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), the great composer of church music and Bach's most important predecessor in that field, to set the German words to equally German music. But this music was probably as little German in character as the text. Schütz had been in Italy to study with the great instrumental master, Giovanni Gabrieli, and, as Apthorp suggests, had no doubt poked his nose into the new dramatic style of Florentines and Mantuans, even though his master had no sympathy with that sort of thing. Hence, when *Dafne* was given in Dresden in 1627 the Saxon highnesses heard a Germanized Italian drama set to German-made Italian music. A similar thing happened in Nuremberg in 1644, when *Das geistliche Waldgedicht oder Freudenspiel, genannt Seelewig*, by Sigismund Gottlieb Staden, the organist of the Sebalduskirche, was performed, though the workmanship here was entirely German and there was a generous flavoring of Teutonic theology and ethics. Soon after this attempt at native art the Italian invasion began in earnest, with Cavalli's

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coming to Vienna in 1658, whither he was followed by Steffani and numerous others.

Leaving these sporadic performances out of consideration, German opera had its beginning in Hamburg. A number of wealthy citizens of that city permanently established an opera house there in 1678, which held the first place among German opera houses for half a century. Johann Theile, 'the father of the contrapuntists,' as his contemporaries called him, who had for a while been Heinrich Schütz's pupil and whom the war had driven from Holstein together with the duke that employed him, had taken refuge in Hamburg, and was promptly commissioned by the burghers to set the music for the two first *singspiele* * to be given in their new house. The first of these was *Adam und Eva, oder der erschaffene, gefallene und wieder aufgerichtete Mensch*, 'a farago of pseudo-philosophic Sunday-school religiosity' (words by Richter). The second was *Orontes*. That the undertaking flourished may be seen from the fact that numerous prominent native composers wrote for it: Johann Franck wrote thirteen operas between 1679 and 1686; Nikolaus Strungk six between 1678 and 1685; Johann Förtsch twelve between 1684 and 1690; Johann Conradi eight between 1691 and 1693; Johann Kusser five between 1693 and 1697; and Johann Matthesen three between 1699 and 1704. Matthesen first appeared as singer at the Hamburg opera and when his *Plejaden* was given in 1699 he coöperated in the performance as composer, singer and conductor. The operas which these men wrote were a curious mixture of Italian and German idioms. Their texts were usually adaptations of wretched Italian originals and the music as Italian as a German instrumentalist could make it. The fact that, as Italian

* *Singspiel* is here used in its linguistic sense—meaning German opera in the vernacular—not with the special significance it was later to attain. (See Chap. III.)

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singers dominated the situation more and more, they were allowed to sing in their own tongue, while their German colleagues sang in theirs, epitomizes the whole state of affairs until the advent of Keiser.

In Reinhard Keiser (1674-1739) the Hamburg opera found its genius. It is known that from 1694 to 1734 he provided the institution with at least one hundred and sixteen operas, perhaps more. Their chief merit was that they did not imitate the reigning Italian model, but from the first to the last they maintain one level, showing no advance in any respect. Their style is for the most part German, that is, either pure or diluted polyphony, which was bred in the instrumental concert and the church, and was utterly unoperatic. We have here finely constructed movements, choruses in which the voices are treated like instruments, highly colored and heavily laden arias (not without their share of Italian coloratura) and rather weak recitatives with no really dramatic accents. There is a mixture of elements, a mire of bad taste and dramatic absurdity, heaped upon a text that is often amusing in its naïveté. Like the Italian opera, this derivative follows the oratorio pattern, but in a somewhat different sense; it is German in style and feeling and sincere in its artistic intentions. Hamburg's supremacy was due to Keiser alone. From his first success, *Irene*, to his last, *Circe*, he was worshipped by an admiring public, though privately his life was far from exemplary and he had to quit the city more than once to escape his creditors. He began his career, by the way, in Brunswick, where an offshoot of the Hamburg opera had been established, and he ended his days in Copenhagen.

Handel's connection with the Hamburg opera was a very transient one. In 1705 he produced *Almira* and *Nero* there and in the following year his *Dafne* and *Florinda*. Matthesen took him under his wing and the

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young composer dabbled just long enough with the pseudo-Italian opera to develop a taste for the unalloyed article, which he proceeded to satisfy in its native habitat. Before the year 1706 was over he had produced *Roderigo* at Florence. In 1707 came *Agripina* in Venice and its composer had become the Italians' 'caro Sassone.' Henceforth Handel was an Italian composer, as far as opera is concerned. He composed only to Italian texts, followed the Neapolitan formula to the letter and, being the greatest composer who so far had occupied himself with opera, he constitutes the apogee of that particular movement. Hence, for all their intrinsic musical value and their many imperishable beauties, his operatic works, over forty in number, are, like those of his predecessors, consigned to oblivion.

And yet Handel is not quite Italian. His music has the abstract consciousness of German instrumentalism. He is, after all, of the great spiritual line that produced Schütz and the great Johann Sebastian. His contrapuntal training is always with him, his grandiose conceptions, his sincere pathos, the serious beauty of his melody are essentially the same in his operas as in his oratorios. They were not of operatic extraction, and however much given to the absurdities of the time, his style has solid German musicianship at the core, tempered with Italian grace and not unaffected by the fine English directness of the noble Purcell.

When Handel went to England conditions were ripe for a complete Italian suzerainty over the operatic domain. His *Rinaldo*, produced in London in 1711, was a tremendous success. It had fifteen successive performances, nine more the next year, and it 'ran' off and on till 1731. It was written within a fortnight! Rockstro calls it 'beyond all comparison the finest opera that had ever been placed upon the stage, in any country,' and cites the 'exceeding beauty' of its many arias,

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especially '*Lascia chio pianga*,' '*Caro sposa*,' '*Vieni e cara*,' '*Figlia mia*,' '*Il tricerbero umiliate*,' of which, like that of the famous March, he prophesies that they will last forever. No doubt that is true, but it is arias, single pieces that we remember, not operas. There is the graceful love duet from *Rinaldo*, the one from *Otto*, with the syncopated accompaniment, Alcina's aria at the end of the first act of the opera of that name, the drinking song from the *Xerxes* and many more. They are to be found in a six-volume collection by Gervinus, properly classified. Handel's operas can, however, be consulted in their entirety in the monumental edition of his works in 100 volumes, edited by Chrysander.

The vicissitudes of Handel's operatic ventures in London have been recounted in Vol. I (p. 434 ff.), also his rivalry with the Italian Buononcini, together with whom and Ariosti he wrote the three-act opera, *Muzio Scevola*. Buononcini, because of this rivalry, appears as a sort of joke in history. But he was quite a respectable composer and remarkable for having, like some other Italians, allied himself with the German group who hold a kind of neutral ground between the Italians and the French. Johann Adolf Hasse (1699-1783) properly belongs to this group. He, too, was called the 'dear Saxon' by the Italians. A pupil of Porpora and Scarlatti, he was a man of very high talents and astounding productivity (over a hundred operas). He transferred operatic supremacy from Hamburg to Dresden where he was attached to the court, together with his wife, the famous Faustina. Extreme and uninterrupted success (his fame on the Continent was equal to that of Handel in England) stood in the way of his self-improvement and he turned out opera after opera to suit the current taste—and the magnificent throat of his wife. But his workmanship was solid and superior to that of most of the Italians of his day. Karl Heinrich Graun (1710-1759),

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whose headquarters was Brunswick, and Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741), of Vienna, as well as Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), son of the great Johann Sebastian, though of a somewhat later period, should be added to this group.

VI

Having disposed of these foreign offshoots of Naples, we must take another glance at Naples itself. One fact stands out: having conquered the world by means of the vocal virtuoso, it is in danger of being swallowed up by the same force. It is no longer a question of producing a fine opera that Maestro So-and-so has been inspired to write, but, rather, of getting an opera written that Signor Senesino or Signora Cuzzoni will be pleased to sing. Signor Senesino being a high and mighty personage, the idol of kings and peoples, it behooves Maestro So-and-so to write his arias so that they will please him and exhibit his golden tones and lightning agility to advantage, or else some other maestro will be chosen for the honor of writing for the illustrious Signor, Signorina and their colleagues. Now these colleagues cannot live on terms of sweet neighborliness unless their respective claims are satisfied without favoritism, and since perfect peace is essential to the manager's good health and prosperity, will Maestro please be sure to observe the conventions? Certainly, and what are they? Well, Maestro knows that arias may be of a number of different kinds: there is the *aria cantabile*, a quiet, slow movement lending itself to the expression of that tender pathos which always wrings a *lagrimetta* from fair ladies' eyes, and besides gives the artist an opportunity for improvised ornamentation, for runs and trills that set the audience to gasping with wonder while the orchestra remains hushed! Then there is the *aria di portamento*, of more strongly marked but

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dignified rhythm, of symmetrical form and full of those long swelling notes in which Signorina prima donna excels so well. Then the *aria parlante*, that vehicle for passionate expression, for violent emotion, with which Signor primo uomo sets all the hearts of Europe a-flutter. And finally the *aria di bravura* (or *d'agilità*)—well, you know, my dear maestro, that Farinelli positively would not sing unless you included such an aria and adorned it with such *passaggi* as no one but he can sing! And, oh yes, Signora Nicolini desires an *aria di mezzo carattere*, which, lying between the *cantabile* and the *portamento*, gives more chance for deep, heart-wringing passion than either, and which has such a rich and varied accompaniment. You know, dear Maestro, how to set all these and what accompaniments they require. Will you be sure, therefore, to choose well the kinds that are best suited for each member of our cast, and that in each of your three acts (be sure to have three and no more!) each of our singers has one aria, and that none of them have two in succession? Of course it would be unfair—and most impolitic—to have two arias of the same character succeed each other! Of course you know the personnel, for *that* is fixed by the laws of opera—three *donne* and three *uomini*, the prima donna is a high soprano, the third is a contralto; the 'first man' (who will sing Hercules) is an artificial soprano, the second is an artificial contralto, and the third a tenor. They tell me that these new writers of *opera buffo* are actually using basses for some of their parts—how shocking! * * * The recitatives? Oh, Signor Metastasio will provide the text for them later—just be sure to have the arias ready so our artists may approve them (or suggest revisions) before they leave town. Thank you!

This was indeed the 'singers' opera'—or perchance the vocal teacher's opera, for Signor Porpora, having trained up a great sopranist on his own *vocalizzi*,

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might easily crown his labors by writing for him an opera that would spread his fame over Europe. That even a man like Handel should 'gracefully' submit to these conditions arouses our wonder; his choleric outbreaks with singers at any rate are no reflection on his disposition. That either Handel, Hasse or their Italian contemporaries, Domenico Scarlatti (son of Alessandro) and Leonardo Vinci, on the one hand, and Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782), the great operatic poet of the period (he of the forty volumes), on the other, should have succeeded in turning out anything of artistic merit, is little short of a miracle. Perhaps Handel alone was able to rise above his restrictions, which, by the way, he violated more than once. Like Mozart, he cared nothing about reform, but also he lacked the dramatic instinct which nevertheless has made the latter's operas—as operas—immortal.

It was the darkness before the dawn. Already the works of the younger Neapolitans are red streaks upon the horizon. The perfection of workmanship, the individualization and specialization of the tonal body, the *concertante* employment of instruments, intentional dynamic contrasts, the development of the recitative into a plastic *accompagnato*, which is not a mere preparation for an aria, and the heightened dramatic fervor of the arias themselves are promising signs. The works of such men as Vinci and Traetto (1727-79) were probably of greater importance than we can realize at present. The Teatro del Fonde in Naples is the centre of these reform tendencies. Here was the first blush of dawn which Bie calls the 'period of great mixtures,' of French, German and Italian styles out of which was to grow the flower of Gluck.

The composer who best exemplifies this mixture of styles is Nicola Jommelli (1714-1774). Jommelli was a pupil of Durante, Leo and Feo and he starts out in the Neapolitan style with *Odoardo* and other works

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performed in Rome, Bologna and Venice, his fame meantime spreading abroad. In 1733 he was called to Stuttgart as conductor of the magnificent court opera. There the close proximity of the Mannheim orchestra and its school of style reformers on the one hand, and the vogue of French ballet with its close kinship to the spectacular French opera (whose reformer Noverre was also engaged in Stuttgart) on the other, reacted upon Jommelli with very salutary results. His harmonic manner and orchestral technique were so influenced by the Germans that after his return to Italy he was considered 'too deep' (even Mozart speaks of him in that sense), and his last works, *Armide* (1770), *Demofonte* (1770), and *Ifigenia in Tauride* (1771), fell flat. His orchestral 'crescendo,' which he brought back from Mannheim, caused a great furore at first.

Undoubtedly the greatest reform influence preceding Gluck's was due to the growth of *opera buffa*. We have noted the creeping in of the comic element in the operas of Cesti, also the rustic comic operas of Rospigliosi and Mazzocchi and other Romans. These had been pretty well forgotten, but the *buffo* element had gradually wormed itself into the so-called *intermezzi*, which it was the custom to perform between the acts of serious operas (as indeed serious plays), much in the manner of the *satiræ* of the classic tragedy. At first these had been mere madrigals, by and by they took on dramatic significance, this significance became connected and there grew a sort of parasite comedy on the side of the big tragedy, the two plots being developed in alternate acts. Like all parasites this one threatened to eat up its host; for as the *opera seria* became more and more stupid and conventional, this comic intermezzo, unbound by rules and free to employ any kind of voices wherever it pleased, became more interesting and amusing. Nothing could save the situation but a divorce, which came with Per-

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golesi's *Serva Padrona*, composed (1733) as an intermezzo, but afterward performed by an Italian troupe of 'buffonists' which invaded Paris in 1852 and started the famous row between the *bouffonistes* and *anti-bouffonistes*. As an independent competitor the *opera buffa* exerted a tremendous influence. Not only did the later Neapolitans write 'buffas' besides 'serias' but they introduced into their 'serias' some of the characteristics of the lighter type. Most important among these was the concerted *finale*. Niccolò Logroscino (1700-1763), 'the God of the Comic Opera,' is responsible for the idea of bringing all the characters of his piece on the stage at the end and combining their voices in a more or less elaborate *ensemble*. This consisted at first of a single movement but was gradually developed into an extended piece consisting of a series of movements, in a variety of tempos and keys. Once this was introduced into the serious opera it led to the introduction of other ensembles, trios, quartets, etc., and the richly harmonized *pezzi concertanti*. By and by the finishing of every act with an *ensemble*, briefly designated as the *finale*, became as much of an obligation in Italian opera as the exclusion of everything but solo song had been before. The 'buffo' voices—baritones, basses, etc.—promptly forced their way into the serious opera too, and there was a general loosening up of convention, which saved the whole business from an early demise.

For its own part the *opera buffa*, after parodying the *opera seria*, came to live on fraternal terms with it; always, however, keeping clear of pathos. Needless to say it also became stereotyped and hedged about with conventions. Like its serious brother it had two groups of *personaggi*. The 'buffo' group consisted of two women, the *prima* and *seconda* buffa and three men, the *primo buffo* (tenor), the *buffo caricato* (usually bass), and the *ultima parte* (bass). The subordi-

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nated 'serious' group consisted of the indispensable lovers, the *donna seria* and the *uomo serio*. This arrangement was, however, never as rigidly adhered to as the corresponding one in the *opera seria*.

All the later Neapolitans wrote in both forms. Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-36) was undoubtedly the greatest genius of the lighter genre, and one of the greatest talents in the whole art of music up to that time. Jommelli, besides his many serious operas, wrote a number of buffas which closely resemble Pergolesi's in style. Then there are Antonio Sacchini (1734-86), Pietro Guglielmi (1727-84), Baldassare Galuppi (1706-85), Davide Perez (1711-82), Giuseppe Sarti (1729-1802), the composer of *Fra i due liganti il terzo gode* (1781) and the operatic mentor of the Russian capital for many years; and more especially Paësiello and Cimarosa, of whom later, and Piccini.

We have reserved Nicola Piccini (1728-1800) to the last, because he forms the best possible bridge to Gluck. His rivalry with Gluck (see Vol. II, p. 35f) seems at this late day his only claim to distinction. In his own day, however, he was a man of great weight. He had the misfortune to be pitted against a giant who was operating upon his own ground. High tragedy was not Piccini's forte. His reputation had been made with *opera buffa*. When his *Cecchina nubile*, or *La buona figliuola*, was produced in Rome, it had an unprecedented success and its composer's name was trumpeted abroad. Jommelli called him an 'inventor.' He had to compose a sequel, *La buona figliuola marita*. These were produced in Paris after he had turned his back on an ungrateful Rome and become the director of the Italian faction of the Paris Académie. Marie Antoinette had invited him to come and compose French operas, after the manner of Lully and Rameau, whose school was languishing. Marmontel adapted Quinault texts for him and he laboriously turned out *Roland* in

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1778. Others in the same vein followed and even the rabid Gluckists could not prevent their success. But his setting of *Iphigénie en Tauride* to the same book as Gluck showed his inferiority. After Gluck's departure Sacchini became his rival and in that new battle royal he produced among others *Didon* (1783), the score of which has been reprinted with that of *Roland* in the *Chefs d'œuvre de l'opéra français*. Altogether he wrote at least 131 operas whose titles are known to-day. There is much in them that is charming and much that is dry. He just misses crossing the divide between mere operatic history and living opera. Living opera begins with Gluck in the *seria* and with Mozart in the *buffa*. An analysis of the work of these masters becomes our next task.

CHAPTER II

GLUCK

The essentials of the Gluck reform; classification of Gluck's works—*Orfeo ed Euridice*—*Alceste*; *Paride ed Elena*—*Iphigénie en Aulide*—*Armide*—*Iphigénie en Tauride*—*Opera seria* after Gluck.

I

'LIVING opera begins with Gluck.' More correctly, it begins with Gluck's 'reform' operas. Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-87) wrote altogether 107 operas, besides eight 'pasticcios' (combinations of arias, etc., from various operas to form a more or less connected stage piece) and four dramatic cantatas. Of these, just seven are counted among the 'reform' works; only six of them live to-day. They are: *Orfeo* (1762), *Alceste* (1767), *Paride ed Elena* (1770), *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1772, produced 1774), *Armide* (1775), and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1777). *Echo et Narcisse* (1779), the composer's last work, though of similar tendency, is of inferior quality and has not survived the ravages of time.

All the earlier works of Gluck belong to his Italian—or as we have called it elsewhere, 'Metastasio' period.* They are works partaking of the general characteristics of the Neapolitan school, subject to its vices as practised by Hasse and Porpora, in quality about on a level with those of Jommelli or Sacchini. However, an innate striving for a more natural form of

* After Pietro Metastasio, the operatic poet, who wrote most of the librettos of the time.

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expression, an essentially dramatic individuality, makes itself felt even in some of Gluck's earliest works. Especially after his trip to London, where he produced *La caduta dei Giganti* in 1746, repeated his *Artamene* and scored a failure with a pasticcio, *Piramo e Tisbe*, this tendency becomes more apparent. He had studied the works of Handel and drawn inspiration from the beauty of their melodies; he had witnessed performances of Rameau's operas in Paris, with their lovely dances, their choruses, their scenic magnificence and pure declamation. After he settled in Vienna, in 1750, his operas began to deepen in musical content and to grow to more monumental proportions. *Semiramide riconosciuta* (1748) already had a wider sweep, *Innocenza giustificata* (1756), still based on Metastasio texts, showed a tendency to depth. Meantime all sorts of perfunctory works, written for the court, yielded all to convention, while their composer was preoccupied with his own education. Upon the advice of Favart he reset, wholly or in part, a number of little works on the order of the French *opéras bouffons* (the Gallic offshoot of the Italian *buffa*—of which later), and the compact form, natural expression and rhythmic life of this style, added to his previous experiences, helped to crystallize the chaste, classic, yet vigorous and highly expressive idiom of his mature period. Raniero de' Calzabigi, poet and former editor of Metastasio's works, filled with reform ideas on his own account, now came to his aid. Calzabigi's aim was to banish the everlasting subject of intrigue from the opera texts of the time; Gluck's, to overthrow hide-bound conventions and virtuoso routine, to end the tyranny of the singers, and establish a simple foundation upon which his imagination could expand. Both desired a return to classic principles—the principles of Peri and his Florentine colleagues.

But what a stretch lay between these two groups of

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reformers! The *camerata* was a set of genial pedants, of mediocre musical accomplishment. Since their time music had developed a new technique, classic forms, and a new and lofty standard of beauty. The Italian instrumentalists, the early German classics, Bach and Handel, the French harmonists, had lived and left their heritage. Gluck possessed that heritage in full. In spite of his avowal that he tried 'to forget that he was a musician,' seeking only to let his music subserve the ends of the drama, he is first and foremost a great musician, but one endowed with a keen dramatic instinct, a sense of logic and a critical faculty that is rarely joined to so fine an imagination. Hence, while in his recitatives he does not offend the laws of declamation, he will not sacrifice beauty of melodic line to that of expression, and while his melodies have at all times a spontaneous and independent grace, they are usually consistent with the prevailing dramatic need. If he sacrifices conventional and absurd forms, he adheres steadfastly to the broader laws of *form*, extending its principles to the work in its entirety, not merely to its individual sections. He is the first to conceive the opera in a spirit of unity, the first creator of the 'music drama.'

His technical reforms all served the same end. He banished the *recitative secco*, substituting a more plastic form of declamation, most always sustained by an expressive orchestral accompaniment. He avoided crass contrasts between recitative and aria and so maintained dramatic continuity. He restored the chorus to its original position of dignity. He fixed the constitution of the orchestra, adding the clarinet, and abolished the harpsichord as its centre (and with it the figured bass). He rejected both the meaningless Italian *sinfonia* and the stilted French overture, and placed in their stead a prelude which aimed to prepare the hearer for the distinctive atmosphere of the piece.

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And, lastly, he was the first to maintain that atmosphere throughout; having endowed each work with a character of its own, to sustain that character from beginning to end.

The first three of his reform operas were produced in Vienna, the others, beginning with *Iphigénie en Aulide*, in Paris. There they were regarded by the Gluck partisans as the legitimate continuation of the Lully-Rameau tradition and as such they established the general character of French opera for a century. We need not dwell here upon the circumstances of Gluck's introduction to Paris, his fight against a politico-literary opposition and widespread intrigue, his being pitted against the Italian party whose standard was forced into the hands of the luckless Piccini, and his ultimate triumph. Gluck's reform constitutes so important a phase of musical history that considerable space has been devoted to it in our Narrative History, to which the reader is referred for additional details. (See Vol. II, chapter I.) In this place we shall attempt only a brief analysis of the works themselves.

II

The story of Orpheus, the divine singer of Greek mythology, who by the power of his tones soothed the wild beasts and softened stones to sympathy, the story which had served the 'inventors of opera' as the libretto of virtually their first opera—nay, three of their first operas, for Monteverdi as well as Peri and Caccini had chosen it for his début—was the story selected by Calzabigi and Gluck for their first 'reform' opera, in which they were to forsake the time-worn plots of intrigue, the stereotyped conventions, the vocal gymnastics that had brought Italian opera to a state of stagnation. From Rinuccini's version of the drama, set to music in

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1600, to Calzabigi's, composed in 1762, numerous composers had used it for operatic settings—Sartorio, Draghi, Lully's sons, Reinhard Keiser, J. J. Fux and Karl Heinrich Graun among them. The earlier texts, however, differ materially from that written for Gluck, which is a beautiful and noble epic of conjugal fidelity.

Orpheus is the symbol of that virtue. His lament over the death of his wife, the beautiful nymph Euridice, marks the opening of the opera. It so rends the hearts of the gods that they permit him, a mortal, to descend to the underworld, there to reclaim his lost love and lead her back to life. But one condition attaches to this privilege, conveyed to him by Amor, the God of love: he is not to turn back and look upon his wife until they are once more upon the earth. Love, of course, proves more powerful than prudence, and Euridice dies a second time. She would be lost to him forever but for the timely intervention of Amor, who induces the gods to relent.

Such, in brief, is the story that Calzabigi unfolds in alternate choruses, declamations and lyric passages. Gluck has woven about it a soft, transparent cloak of sound: alternating choruses of statuesque purity, recitatives of subtle expressiveness, arias of simple charm—pure melodic outbursts whose beauty caresses our ears while it rarely offends even the most fastidious sense of dramatic fitness. The overture is a clarion call that 'ushers us into the classic period of opera.' It is a movement in classic form swinging back and forth between C major and G major. Its musical value is slight. The curtain rises upon a chorus of shepherds and shepherdesses, mourning for Euridice in measured strains of minor triads, of minor ninths and diminished sevenths—a formal yet genuine and affecting piece, of classic grace, transcendent purity, poignant syncopations. It is punctuated by Orpheus' detached cries of sorrow, interrupted after a bit by his pathetic recitative. After a 'pantomime of sweet sorrow,' which gently animates the figures, they return to the first

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chorus and to their statue-like pallor of the opening. Orpheus, in a short aria, twice interrupted by recitative outbursts, pours forth his lament. Amor appears in answer to a more impassioned recitative, recites his promise of Euridice's return and sings a graceful and joyful arietta, and Orpheus closes the act with an accompanied recitative proclaiming his resolve to reclaim his love.

It will be seen at once that this free design bears little resemblance to the fixed scheme of the older Italian operas. The second act is still farther removed. Clément * calls it 'a masterpiece from the first note to the last' and 'perhaps one of the most astonishing productions of the human mind.' The chorus of demons barring the entrance to the abode of shades breaks forth in rhythmic fury, growling, menacing, thunders out its 'No!' to Orpheus' entreaties, three times repeated and each time more appealing. Gradually the chorus softens to the sweet strains of his lyre, diminishes, and dies as though vanquished. Orpheus' accents have not only touched the Furies and brought them to submission, but have beguiled the audience itself into sympathy. A wild 'Dance of the Furies,' added for the Paris production, ends the scene. The next tableau reveals the Elysian fields. The music, like the scene, is bathed in soft pastel shades. Euridice's aria with chorus (again added for Paris) of surpassing beauty, comes next. A ballet of quiet charm animates the blissful figures; Orpheus enters to a contemplative aria, '*Che puro ciel.*' Again a chorus, of truly ethereal quality, expresses in soft accents and serene consonance the calm beauty of the Region of Bliss. The air of Euridice carries a similar message. In the course of a chorale movement alternating with ballet and recitative Orpheus is reunited to his spouse.

The third act opens with lengthy recitative alterca-

* F. Clément & Larousse: *Dictionnaire des opéras.*

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tions between the two lovers: Orpheus mindful of his vow not to look upon her; Euridice in despair over his apparent lack of tenderness. It ends in a duet, followed by the lament of Euridice (recitative and aria), after which follows the dramatic climax of the piece (in accompanied recitative) leading to Euridice's second death. Orpheus' grief over his new loss is expressed in the celebrated aria '*Che farò senza Euridice*,' a beautiful *andante* melody, twice reiterated with alternating short *adagio* passages. The second intervention of Amor; Euridice's awakening; a ballet of joy; solos by Orpheus, Amor and Euridice, each answered by a choral refrain, make up the rondo-form ending of the opera.

'Whoever regards this edifice' (we are quoting Dr. Bie), 'whoever tabulates it, so to speak, in his mind, must admire its organic structure. Not only have forms of the various genres of recitatives and arias, choruses and solos, dances and interludes become entities, but a monumental whole has been created which, though animated by a development of contrast and differentiation of its elements, never leaves the restful lines of a fundamentally lyric atmosphere. The few dramatic moments—the appearance of Amor, the recovery of Euridice and her second loss—violate no formal laws. It is the architecture of a music which, as it were, pleases the eye as well as the ear. It is the great sonnet of a Parnassus which delivers to us the formal power of classic emotions in a degree that cannot be equalled by all the historic imitations of ancient tragedy nor all the massed choruses of our own time. It remains the miracle of plastic beauty in tones. What we dream back into the golden age of the ancient world has here been accomplished and realized.'

Orfeo ed Euridice was first performed in its original (Italian) form, Oct. 5, 1762, in Vienna. When the French version of the opera was staged in Paris twelve

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years later, it was revised and changed in many details. The rôle of Orpheus was changed from alto to tenor (for the celebrated Legros), but that has, even in Paris, been changed back (in a revival by Mme. Viardot in 1859). The fashions of Paris demanded the addition of a bravura aria for Orpheus, thoroughly unsuited to the work, a new aria for Amor, a Dance of the Furies and other ballets, and the scene of Euridice with Chorus in Act II, also a trio at the end. The usual performance of to-day is a mixture, Euridice's beautiful scene being included even in the Italian version.

III

Alcestis (*Alceste*), the wife of Admetus, king of Phææ, had also before Gluck become a favorite subject for operatic treatment, though not till Lully set his *Alceste, ou le triomphe d'Alcide* over a text of Quinault (1674). The heroine of Euripides' tragedy reappeared in other versions at Hamburg (1680), with music by Strungk, and again (1719) with music by Caspar Schürmann; in London by Handel (*Admeto*, 1727) and by Lampugnani (1745), besides a number of times after the appearance of Gluck's immortal work in 1767. Gluck's text was, like that of his *Orfeo*, by Raniero de' Calzabigi. In accordance with the high purpose that the authors had set for themselves (for it was in *Alceste* that they resolutely carried into effect the reform ideas but cautiously espoused in *Orfeo*), the librettist, instead of the florid descriptions, banal phrases and trite metaphors of Quinault, laid stress on interesting situations, varied scenes, sincere language and dramatic passion.

Admetus, at the opening of the drama, is about to die. The people, before the palace, bemoan the fate of their beloved king. They are joined by Alcestis, accompanied by her two children,

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who bids them follow her to the temple of Apollo to implore the mercy of the god. There the high priest and people offer their supplications, and the oracle announces that only a willing human sacrifice will save the king's life. The people fly from the temple in horror, but Alcestis calmly offers herself as sacrifice and is accepted. In the second act Admetus is already recovering, the people rejoice and Admetus joins them, only to hear that he owes his life to the promise of a human sacrifice. Alcestis is at length forced to admit that it is she, and a passionate struggle for death ensues between the two lovers. Act III again opens with the lament of the people—this time for their departed queen. Hercules enters and, horrified at the news of Admetus' loss, resolves to restore Alcestis to his friend. The king meantime overtakes Alcestis at the portals of Tartarus, where he renews his plea to be permitted to pay the price of death. After tearing herself from his arms Alcestis finally surrenders herself to the powers of the underworld, but Hercules in a fierce struggle releases her and Apollo sanctions her restoration to her faithful husband.

This is the course of action in the revised French version of the opera. In the original Italian version a scene in the Underworld was placed at the beginning of the second act, consisting of choruses and dances of the inhabitants of hell, songs of the *Nume infernale*, arias of Alcestis and her friend Ismene (who is altogether eliminated in the later version). Musically this scene was full of beauty and grandeur; the Alceste aria *Chi mi parla* is so fine that it has frequently been interpolated in other places of the revised version. But dramatically the scene adds nothing essential—it does not advance the action. Calzabigi, who had cleared the story of all the intrigues, deceptions and gossiping details with which it had been loaded down by other librettists, also eliminated the Hercules episode, which even in the Euripides drama had something of the comic about it. In the Italian version, Apollo simply relents without the interference of the doughty giant and the drama loses none of its essentials, while gaining in dignity. The music allotted to Hercules is, by

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the way, of rather inferior quality and has been attributed to Gossec.

In his famous preface to *Alceste*, Gluck says in part: 'I wished to reduce music to its true function, which is to second poetry in expressing the emotions and situations of the play, without interrupting the action and chilling it with useless and superfluous ornaments. * * * I have wished neither to stop an actor where the dialogue is at its warmest, in order to let the orchestra play a tedious *ritornello*, nor to hold him back on a favorite vowel in the middle of a word, that he may either show off the agility of his fine voice in a long roulade or wait for the orchestra to give him time to take breath for a cadenza. I have not thought proper to pass rapidly over the second part of an aria even when it is the more important and impassionate, in order to have the words of the first part repeated the regulation four times, and end the air where perhaps the sense does not end. * * * In fine I have sought to banish all those abuses against which common sense and reason have so long protested in vain.

'I have deemed that the overture ought to apprise the spectator of the action to be represented, and, so to speak, constitute itself to the argument; that the coöperation of the instruments should be determined proportionately to the interest and passion of the text, and that, above all, no sharp contrasts between aria and recitative should be left in the dialogue, so as not to interrupt the scene contrary to sense, nor inappropriately interrupt the vigor and warmth of the scene.

'I have further believed that the greater part of my effort should be the searching for a beautiful simplicity, and I have avoided making a display of difficulty at the expense of clearness; I have attached no value to the discovery of a novelty, except in so far as it was naturally suggested by the situation, or helpful to the expression. Finally there is not a single rule of form

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that I have hesitated to sacrifice for the sake of the effect. Such are my principles.'

'Success,' he concludes, 'has justified my ideas, and has shown me that simplicity and truth are the great principles of beauty in all works of art.' *Alceste* has vindicated these principles, if ever they needed vindicating. The dramatic intensity of its music is greater than that of *Orfeo*, if it does not preserve the classic perfection, the melodic spontaneity of the earlier opera. It is the dramatist who speaks here and often his intentional avoidance of sensuous melody leads him into stretches of rather wearisome rhetoric. But nothing could surpass the monumental beauty, the earnest abandon of his choruses, freely interspersed with solos and noble instrumental movements which accompany pantomimes designed to intensify the prevailing mood, all of which elements combine to make a truly homogeneous and continuous 'scene.'

Such is the opening chorus, into which the finely classic and expressive overture leads without interruption. A short outburst of the chorus, followed by a fanfare and the herald's announcement, leads to an extended choral development building up to a double chorus, then Alceste's recitative, interrupted by the chorus, then her first aria—'*Grand Dieux, du destin qui m'accable*,' an Adagio increasing to an Allegro—and another answer by the double choir. Such again is the scene in the temple, opening with a short pantomime, the high priest's recitative, in four sections, each increasing in passion and each followed by the mighty surge of the Apollo chorus. Alceste's grandiose call to the night, and her famous aria '*Divinités du Styx*' forms the rapidly swelling climax of this scene. At the beginning of the second act there is the charming G major movement with its spirited calls of 'Hail,' its varied ballet movements, its lilting chorus of joy, interrupted by short recitatives that gradually reveal

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the tragic situation. Still the chorus sings its *grazioso* 3/8 movement, still Admetus gives thanks in a bright *da capo* aria. But Alceste's aria '*Je n'ai jamais chéri la vie*' throws a deeper shadow. A rapid discussion ensues, back and forth in *tempo rubato*; the accompaniment becomes more agitated, Admetus' recitative works up into an aria, the chorus takes up his grief, and Alceste bursts into a pathetic appeal to the gods. More choral interjections and a magnificent lyric outburst of noble pathos, the aria '*Ah, malgré moi*' complete the act.

At the opening of the third act the people's mourning, in double chorus, is still heard while Evander and Hercules converse. The chorus (of the spirits of hell, this time), accompanied by Charon's horns, paints the barren landscapes of the region of the Styx, and the chorus, in a stiffly classic diatonic C major, spreads the spirit of joy at the end. Thus the chorus stands as a solid background throughout the drama, against which the figures are projected. The scenes, one and all, are continuous. Even when there *are* cadences they are hardly perceptible, and often the numbers run into each other without 'full stop. There is, on the other hand, a fine consciousness of form that makes each scene, each act, a rounded whole, whose modulations and recapitulations might be designed for a symphony. For the first time a genius has conceived the two ideas as one, the logic of the drama and the logic of formal construction. In *Alceste*, says Clément, Gluck has accomplished the most complete dramatic expression by means of declamation—probably the most intimate union of action and music before Wagner.

Alceste was produced in Vienna, Dec. 26, 1767. The Paris production took place on April 23, 1776. Its immense success fanned the flame of the opposition anew, but Gluck's supremacy was by this time established;

Hercules Struggling with Death for the Body of Alceſtis
After the painting by Lord Leighton



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tickets were for the first time issued for the general rehearsal, which Gluck conducted in a nightcap and without surcoat. Nobles of high rank hastened to hand him his wig and coat when he had finished.

A few words will suffice to give Gluck's next 'reform' opera a place in this survey. *Paride ed Elena* was not a significant step in the composer's development—a mere intermezzo, in Bie's words. The familiar tale of Paris and the fair Helen, the Genesis of the Iliad—too familiar to need recounting—had already been the subject of many operas. A masque by Congreve, 'The Judgment of Paris,' with music by several contemporary composers, was produced in London in 1701, and the same text did service for another setting in 1740, while the subject and the title were used in various other versions, German, French and Italian. 'The Rape of Helen' was treated by Puccitelli, Cirillo, Bassani, Keiser and Galuppi (*Le nozze di Paride*, 1756). Calzabigi's libretto was set only by Gluck, who again prefaced the score with an exposition of his musico-dramatic ideas. Of the opera itself not much has survived the ravages of time. The overture is in symphonic form, with the three movements clearly represented—indicating the advance of the classic idea. Bie cites as noteworthy features the pretty Venus chorus at the beginning, which was taken over into *Alceste* (chorus of rejoicing, second act); the well-made Paris aria with the charming oboe echo; the sudden, remarkably daring dramatic interruption of the *Spinge amate*; this and that fine bit of tone painting, like Amor's rosy description of Paris, the rigid Athletes' choruses and dances, the characteristic *Aspro ed ingrato canto* of the Spartans, in contrast to the flabby melody of the Phrygians, the fluid duet in the third act, the bantering trio, the somewhat virtuosic but vigorously attacking final duet. Streatfeild dwells on the lyric spontaneity of the music of *Paride*, a quality the absence of which he be-

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moans in some of the later works. *Paride* was first produced in Vienna, Nov. 3, 1770.

IV

Iphigénie en Aulide, *Paride's* successor, marks an epoch, not only in the career of Gluck, but in the history of opera, for it transferred operatic supremacy to Paris, and substituted the French language for Italian as its leading idiom. It was, as we have before stated, Gluck's first opera originally set to French words. It will be remembered that the coöperation of Le Blanc du Roullet, the chargé of the French embassy in Vienna, was responsible for the shifting of the scene of Gluck's activity, and his acceptance by the Paris Académie.

Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, is the chief character of one of the most powerful myths of antiquity. Chosen by the seer, Calchas, as sacrifice to Artemis or Diana, that she shall dispose the gods to release the Greek fleet launched against Troy but becalmed in the harbor of Aulis, she is finally saved from death by the goddess herself, and transported through the air to Tauris, while a she-deer is substituted upon the altar. In Tauris she is forced to supervise the cruel rites of sacrificial worship, until freed by her brother Orestes (with the assistance of his friend Pylades), sent to Tauris by the command of the oracle to capture the image of Artemis and return it to Greece. Already Euripides had divided the story into two sections, known as the Aulis and the Tauris episodes. Both Racine (upon whose version Le Blanc du Roullet's is based) and Goethe followed his example, and operatic composers beginning with Keiser (1699), Coletti (1706), Domenico Scarlatti (1713), and Karl Heinrich Graun (1729) did the same. Le Blanc

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du Roullet based his version upon that of Racine in an honest endeavor to provide a practicable libretto. Later generations have found fault with it, have cut, added and revised. Wagner's practised hand has been laid upon both text and music.

The action of his version runs briefly as follows: Agamemnon is in Aulis; his daughter Iphigenia and her mother Clytemnestra are on their way to join him and to meet Achilles, Iphigenia's betrothed, whom she is to wed before the departure for Troy. Agamemnon's unwitting offense against the goddess is the cause of the Greeks' plight and the cruel demand for the sacrifice of the king's daughter. He is defiant, and in the first act has sent a messenger to intercept his wife and daughter, warning them to return home, since Achilles has proved faithless. Trusting in the success of his ruse he consents to yield up his daughter to the high priest, Calchas, if she sets foot on Aulis. But the message miscarries and already the Greeks greet their queen's arrival with joyful homage. Once more the king tries to forestall fate by telling his wife that Achilles is false. Iphigenia is outraged, but the arrival of the hero himself and his avowals restore her faith. In Act II the lovers prepare for their marriage. From the lips of the faithful Arcas they learn of Agamemnon's vow—and are warned not to approach the altar. Achilles vows to save his beloved; Iphigenia, filled with a high sense of duty, is determined to submit to the sacrifice. Achilles now fiercely reproaches Agamemnon for his cruelty, and the king, in a soliloquy, reveals his inward struggle between love of his daughter and fear of the gods, to whom he passionately offers himself as sacrifice. The last act opens with the Greeks' demand that the gods' will be fulfilled. After refusing to fly with Achilles and taking farewell from her mother, Iphigenia is led to the altar, while Clytemnestra breaks out in a fury of passion against the gods. Achilles and the Thessalians at the last moment rush in to attack the Greeks and so prevent the sacrifice, but suddenly Calchas steps forth to announce that the gods are appeased, the altar has ignited by itself and the wind is rising. In the original version a prayer of thanks, a little song by a Greek girl and a Chaconne led up to a final 'To Victory' chorus in unison, 'a first Marseillaise, of mighty rhythm * * * sweeping stage and audience in an intoxication of victory, one of the most brilliant inspirations of Gluck.' But in revised versions the composer let Artemis her-

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self effect the reconciliation. Wagner, without knowing of the old ending, recomposed it and ended with the cry 'To Troy!'—quite in the spirit of Gluck's first intention.

In *Iphigénie en Aulide* Gluck, the musician, has achieved a new triumph. Gluck, the dramatist, is adapting himself to new conditions. It is evident that he is less concerned with reform than he had been. He advances another step in technique: the freedom of disposition which is noted in *Alceste* becomes more pronounced; the declamatory passages, dialogues, arias, ensembles, choruses and dances crowd each other in greater profusion, with no thought but for the demands of the action. On the other hand the *da capo* form occurs more frequently than before, and in other respects also the contemporary influence is perceptible. The intrinsic charm of the human voice has been given due consideration; the tendency to greater variety of ensembles—duets, trios, quartets—the combination of solo voices with the chorus and the development of the extended *accompagnato* (accompanied recitative) have been taken into account. The recitative frequently attains a lyricism that approaches the aria, and its accompaniment draws upon the art of polyphony for higher dramatic power. The aria, in its turn, sacrifices lyric flow for the sake of passionate force and momentary dramatic fitness. A wider sweep, a hardier beauty, distinguished Gluck at this juncture; a greater depth, with a touch of the bitter-sweet, has taken the place of the placid, soft charm of *Orfeo*.

The overture is a classic sonata movement of Mozartian cast (Mozart has actually supplied it with a conclusion). The melody of Agamemnon's first recitative is its opening motive. That recitative and the aria which follows—the beautiful *Brillant auteur de la lumière*—characterize the grandly pathetic figure of Agamemnon, and the following aria (after the impor-

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fortunate chorus of the Greeks) shows us the equally pathetic, patriarchal Calchas, a slave to cruel duty. The two unite in a brief imitative duet and, after extended altercation, join their voices to the chorus, as in charming accents it greets the approach of Iphigenia and her mother. Ballets, greetings and acknowledgments enframe the impassioned arias of Clytemnestra—outraged, of Iphigenia—proudly resigned, of Achilles—noble and impatient. The duet of the lovers, celebrating their condition with mellifluous sixths and thirds—just as Siegfried and Brünnhilde have done a century after them—forms the musical high water-mark and dramatic conclusion of the act.

Lovely choral strains of women's voices; a nobly graceful *da capo* aria in F major, such as Mozart might have written for Donna Anna; the full chorus '*Chantons célébrons notre reine,*' with Achilles' tenor soaring above it, and another ballet including the famous A major gavotte that Brahms has arranged for the piano, lead us to the heart of the second act. The terrible truth is revealed; Clytemnestra breaks forth in another passionate aria, '*Par son père cruel,*' which is a classic to this day, and joins the two lovers in a great surging trio. The agitated double recitative and duet of Achilles and Agamemnon lead into the latter's great scene—perhaps the musical, as it is the dramatic, climax of the opera. Here is a picturesque description of it: 'An *accompagnato* begins, interrupted by hurrying runs, over drum taps and tremolos, he [Agamemnon] feels his heart as it bleeds for the demanded sacrifice; *lento*, *presto*, one heart upon the other; cries which the orchestra pursues in tearing haste; a long pause; the raving exhausts itself in descending chromatics, the orchestra sings his *déchirer mon cœur* with him; a quiet A minor movement (shortened by Wagner), in *da capo* design, brings his mood into a regular course, an Allegro in D major gives the pathetic

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close (which Wagner expanded): he offers himself to the cruel goddess and her priest—Truth and Effect.' *

Iphigenia has two more lovely short arias in the last act, Achilles one and Clytemnestra one (with chorus), each characteristic of their personalities. Gluck achieves in this opera something of the musical portraiture for which Mozart had so marvellous a genius. There are two more choruses: a solemn one, a prayer, and a mighty double chorus, in which Greeks and Thes-salians clash in wild polyphony. The quartet of the four principal characters, which begins the general re-joicing of the finale, is, like that of *Fidelio*, one of the classics of pure music. The final chorus has been men-tioned above.

Iphigénie was placed on the stage of the Paris Opera on April 19, 1774, after many weary months of in-trigue, during which the 'war' of Gluckists and Picci-nists was at its height. After this production the con-test was waged more fiercely than ever, with the Abbé Arnaud and Suard at the head of Gluck's champions, and Marmontel, La Harpe, Ginguené and d'Alembert as leaders of the opposition. Meantime Gluck proceeded calmly with the staging of the rearranged versions of *Orfeo* and *Alceste*, as well as his comic operas, *Cythère assiégée* and *L'Arbre enchantée*, both recast. He left for Vienna with the libretto of a *Roland* in his pocket, but when he learned that Piccini had been given the same text to compose, he abandoned the work and in his anger destroyed the sketches. That loss is the one tangible result of the great 'war.'

In 1777 Gluck was back in Paris with the score of his next great work—*Armide*. He had the audacity to do for himself what Marmontel had been doing for Pic-cini: he had adapted a Quinault text for his own use, and incidentally snubbed all the contemporary libret-tists by turning librettist (or adapter) himself. Thus

* Oskar Ble: *op. cit.*, p. 137.

GLUCK'S 'ARMIDE'

Gluck for the time turns his back upon the classic myths to choose a subject that was, if anything, more popular and that had been tried by his revered predecessor, Lully. Besides him, Ferrari (1639), Rampini (1711), Graun (1751), Traetta (1760), Jommelli (1771) and Sacchini (1772) had used the same story, derived from the 'Jerusalem Delivered' of Tasso. Handel's (1711) is of course the most famous of the numerous 'Rinaldos' that treat the same subject. Quinault's text, written for Lully, was, by the way, also used by Graun. Its outline is briefly this:

Armida, Queen of Damascus, possessed of extraordinary physical beauty and versed in the arts of magic, complains to her confidantes, Phœnicia and Sidonia, that of all brave knights one, and one only, the great Rinaldo, a besieger of Jerusalem with Godfrey of Bouillon, is proof against her charms. Eager to captivate him, she declares her intention of marrying him and no other, when urged by her uncle, Hidraot, to choose a consort. By the power of her magic an attack of the crusaders had been diverted. The feast which celebrates the victory is interrupted by Aront, charged with bringing in the captives. Aront is wounded and declares that he has been attacked by Rinaldo, who has freed the prisoners. Vows of revenge close the act. In the next Rinaldo appears with one of the liberated knights, Artemidor. He has incurred the displeasure of Godfrey and has left the crusaders' ranks, bent on adventure. Artemidor is sent back to his commander. Presently the desert about Rinaldo becomes a bower of enchantment. Naiads sing and the hero falls into a sweet slumber. Armida, the enchantress herself, now hastens upon the scene, at first bent on his destruction. Becoming enamored of him, however, she transports him upon a cloud to her palace. There, in the third act she seeks once more, while lingering in his arms, to overcome her passion. Rinaldo has spurned her love. She conjures up the spirit of Hate, only to send him off again, whereupon he vows never again to heed her call, leaving her to the pangs of love. The fourth act is devoted to the attempts of Ubaldo and a Danish knight, who are sent to reclaim Rinaldo, to penetrate the ramparts of magic and deception that Armida had raised about her beloved. In the fifth act they succeed, but only through the

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power of a golden sceptre, given to Ubaldo by a magician. Rinaldo has now succumbed to the charms of Armida. Recognizing himself in Godfrey's diamond shield, and seeing how he has been converted into a rose-garlanded lover, the hero, filled with shame, accepts the sword from Artemidor's hand and flees with the two knights, leaving Armida to break forth in cries of wrath. Once more alone, she summons her demons to destroy the palace, and the drama ends in a wild chaos.

Gluck has gone a step further in his reforms. What he accomplished was not less radical than what Wagner was to do at a later day—with a subject not dissimilar—*Tannhäuser*. And Paris broke into a riot on both occasions! He indicates his dramatic purpose by outward signs: the score is divided into scenes instead of 'numbers.' Recitatives are still marked; arias are taken for granted. The whole thing, as drama, has organic life. Yet he sacrifices none of his reform to the romanticism of his subject, but paints a magnificent background of magic, musical magic, and projects his characters in clear relief. That is the most important step: he characterizes more sharply (especially Armida stands out in all her imperious pride, her unbridled passion), he accentuates his contrasts. Yet he loses nothing of the lyrical beauty and spontaneity of his earlier works. In such scenes as the Naiads' song, and the charming ballets he stands forth as the classic melodist, in all his glory. Yet it was in this connection that he wrote (in the famous letter to Roulet): 'I have tried to be a painter and poet rather than musician.' Painter, yes—in tones. In the same letter he says: 'I confess to you that with this opera I should like to finish my career. It is true that it will take the public at least as long to understand it as in the case of *Alceste*. In *Armida* there is a kind of finesse that is absent from *Alceste*; for here I have formed the means to make my characters speak in such a way that you will recognize first of all by the manner of their ex-

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pression, whether it is Armida that speaks or an attendant, etc.' This 'finesse' was *not* altogether absent in *Alceste*, but it has become conscious and therefore more prominent here—that is *Armida's* mission.

We cannot dwell long on details. The overture is indifferent—it had been used before in *Telemacco* and in *Feste d'Apollo*. Act I opens with the easy charm of melodies sung by Armida's attendants. Armida's proud accents stand out in contrast. She takes a more gracious tone with Hidraot. Her '*La chaine de l'Hymen*' is full of loveliness. The scene with Aront and the people bursts upon us with unexpected power, the warlike chorus '*Pursuivons jusqu'au trépas*' surges up to a sweeping rhythmic climax, accompanied by the hurrying brass triplets that end the act *fortissimo*. Act II is full of contrasts. Armida and Hidraot conspire together in the second scene, over a wildly agitated orchestra; Rinaldo, in the next, sings his beautiful slumber-song—broadly conceived, musically refined and bathed in the most entrancing colors of the orchestra; Naiads wind their undulating G major about him; Armida, dagger in hand, finds him with violent rushes of the strings; gradually she softens to a *grazioso con espressione* that reveals the amorous side of her character. In Act III the contrast between her and her attendants is again emphasized. Her great scene with Hate, backed by the chorus and dance of furies, pulsates with demoniac power, and the beautifully contrasted ending in G major ('*O ciel*') is one of the most nobly melodious bits of the opera. Act IV is as inane as it is inconsequential dramatically; yet not without grace. But Act V opens with the wonderful love duet; it brings the chorus of blessed spirits that charms both Rinaldo and the audience; and lastly, the final solo scene of Armida (perhaps a forerunner of future Isolde and Brünnhilde finales), in which her rage breaks down over the pulsations and tremolos of a great dra-

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matic orchestra. A century of striving did not get far beyond this!

When *Armida* was performed at the Paris Opera, Sept. 23, 1777, the flames of partisan conflict went up in a righteous conflagration. The familiar cry that the composer had 'no melody' went up from the Piccinists, and as Gluck predicted, it took some time for the work to gain any general acceptance. But the production of the next, the last, of the great operas, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, effectively beat down all opposition. Gluck's inferior swan-song, *Echo et Narcisse*, could no longer diminish his reputation.

V

Iphigénie en Tauride, the sequel to the earlier *Iphigénie*, has its scene laid in the country of the barbarous Scythians, whose king, Thaos, is subject to haunting superstitions, and demands frequent human sacrifices upon the altar of Artemis.

Iphigenia has been wafted thither by the goddess after being saved from the sacrificial block at Aulis, and has been placed in charge of the ceremonies as high priestess. During her absence great woes have befallen her house. Agamemnon, her father, has been slain by his adulterous wife, Clytemnestra, and his death has been avenged by his son, Orestes, now on his way to Tauris with his friend Pylades to recover the image of Artemis. Only his sister Electra remains of the noble house of Atreus. At the opening of the drama a great storm rages and the priestesses cry to the gods for mercy. Thaos, alarmed by their cries, enters, and having learned of the presence of two strangers upon the shore, he orders their sacrifice to appease the goddess. They are brought in and bidden to prepare for death. In the second act, which plays in prison, Orestes, deaf to the consoling words of Pylades, is left to rage in mad fury till exhaustion overtakes him. In his sleep the Furies still pursue him and he sees the form of his murdered mother before him. He awakes and finds Iphigenia, who has come to inquire

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into his origin and purposes. Brother and sister do not recognize each other. He tells her the terrible news of her family's fate but does not disclose his identity, saying that Orestes himself is dead. She is overcome with grief. In the third act she desires to send a messenger to Electra and, trying to decide whom to release for the purpose, she is led by a strange force to choose Orestes. A struggle ensues between the latter and his friend, each anxious to die that the other may live, and only upon Orestes' threat to take his own life does Pylades accept the mission. Iphigenia, in the fourth act, held back by a strange feeling of sympathy, calls upon the goddess to harden her for the task of sacrifice. Orestes is led in and the fatal blow is about to strike, when Orestes' exclamation to himself, 'Didst thou perish thus in Aulis, Iphigenia, my sister?' brings about their mutual recognition. Thaos, enraged by the interruption, is about to execute summary punishment upon both brother and sister, when Pylades, rather opportunely, returns with a band of young Greeks and promptly turns the tables. At the end Pallas Athene commands Orestes and Iphigenia to return to Greece with the image of Artemis.

The text of Gluck's opera was written by N. F. Guillard. He chose this 'catastrophic' development of the drama rather than the more complicated version of Euripides, who brings about the recognition through Pylades (the husband of Electra), or those of the eighteenth century librettists, who had woven a net of intrigue about the whole story. In the version that Majo set to music, Orestes had killed Clytemnestra by accident, in Jommelli's and Traetta's operas on the subject, the Furies were already utilized for dramatic effect. Gluck has taken a leaf from their book. The originality of his effects, however, and the truth of his expression, surpassed anything they or any one else had yet attempted. He carried out the purposes he set himself in *Alceste* with more consistency than in the earlier *Iphigénie* and with greater success musically. All his lyric spontaneity returned here, to combine, in perfect fusion, with the most elevated dramatic style. That fusion marks the final attainment of his ideal—

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the perfect interpretation of human emotion in the language of beautiful sounds.

The overture plunges us into a rising storm. As it reaches its height, the scene reveals the temple with Iphigenia and her priestesses. The expressive lament of Iphigenia is heard when quiet is restored. She calls upon the goddess to release her, for she has lived too long in misery. Thaos' heavy chords contrast sharply with her plaintive melody, and the chorus of Scythians, with strident wood-winds, cymbals and triangles, is sufficiently barbaric. Orestes' words are set in operatic pathos, Pylades' in a charming expressive aria. Both join in a double recitative.

In the second act (in prison) Orestes sings the famous aria '*Le calme rentre dans mon couer*' ('Calm enters my heart once more'). When the players, at rehearsal, were puzzled because the orchestra continues, in spite of the words, its picturing of mental agitation, Gluck called out, 'Go right on, he lies—he has killed his mother!' The story is told to show how consistently Gluck aimed at dramatic truth. The furies appear with a chorus of 'indescribable weirdness,' punctuated by his cries of mercy. In a wonderfully beautiful recitative, Iphigenia laments her family's fate, and after the sweetly consoling chorus of priestesses she sings her celebrated aria, '*Oh malheureuse Iphigénie!*' With the chorus she sings another lovely lament, '*Contemplez ces tristes apprêtes.*' Her choosing of one of the two friends as messenger occasions a beautiful stretch of song, and the noble contest of the two for death unites them in a fine duet. The classic hymn '*Chaste fille de Latone*' is an outstanding number of the last act. The excitement of the impending sacrifice and Iphigenia's emotional struggle, the recognition and catastrophe that overtakes Thaos, bring us to the end. As the Abbé Arnaud said, 'there is but one beautiful piece in the opera, and that is—the whole work.'

OPERA SERIA AFTER GLUCK

The 'second Iphigenia' went in scene for the first time on May 18, 1779, with Mlle. Levasseur in the title rôle. The expected contest with Piccini, who was to set the same libretto, was a tame affair. Piccini was two years late—the storm had blown over and Gluck was rounding out his life in peaceful seclusion in Vienna. He died in 1787, at the age of seventy-three. For twenty-five years he had 'preferred the muses to the sirens,' he had created a musical drama in place of a dramatic concert. In history he represents the triumph of dramatic truth over pure music. And yet—had he not been a great musician first and foremost, no one would care. When all is said and done, the placid beauty of *Orfeo*, happy in its musical charm, will linger longest in our memories. This phenomenon of history—the musician who would be dramatist, and conquered by music—has found its sequel.

.

Gluck had no successor, strictly speaking. His pupil Salieri (1750-1825) followed his style pretty closely in *Les Danaïdes* which he produced in part with Gluck's name attached to it to insure its success. Salieri's later career, though centred in Vienna, is identified with the tendencies of his Italian compatriots, who followed in the footsteps of Piccini and Sacchini. The development of the concerted finale and the *pezzo concertante* was perhaps the most important feature of their work, but it quickly led to a new stereotype which served for imitations no less uninspired, if somewhat more varied, than those of the older Italian school. Not until the advent of Rossini (born 1792) did the Italian *opera seria* experience any important accessions. Meantime, however, the lighter form of Italian opera, the *opera buffa*, and its international offshoots had become the source of the most fertile developments. These shall be the subjects of our next chapter.

CHAPTER III

MOZART AND THE COMIC OPERA

The development of opera buffa: Rome, Florence and Naples—The beginnings of *opéra comique*: Rousseau to Grétry—The English ballad-opera—The German *singspiel*—Mozart's mission in opera; *Entführung*—*Figaro*—*Don Giovanni*—*Zauberflöte*—*Costi fan tutte*; conclusion.

I

THE objective of this chapter is Mozart. Not by means of a conscious reform, not by virtue of any didactic reasoning, but by the force of purely intuitive genius, he exerted upon the course of comic opera—of opera in general—an influence equal to that of Gluck on serious opera. Hence to us Comic Opera (in its broadest sense *) begins with Mozart. But Mozart did not create his medium. His art represents the confluence of roughly three—or four—distinct streams which had their rise in the seventeenth century. They are the Italian *opera buffa*, the French *opéra comique* and the English ballad opera, which in turn gave rise to the German *Singspiel*. Thus Mozart, like Gluck, signalizes a fusion of styles in which all the leading nations of Europe have a part, though of course the Italian and German elements are the dominant ones. With the exception of three or four, none of the works

* This includes not only all operatic works of a non-tragic character, but also tragi-comic and semi-tragic works developed upon the technical lines of the so-called comic genres—*opera buffa*, *opéra comique* and *singspiel*. *Don Giovanni*, according to modern ideas, is a tragic opera, but it contains comic elements, its characters are in part *buffo* characters, and it has the characteristic form of the opera buffa.

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of these various species produced before Mozart are alive to-day. But historically they are of importance to us. We may review them briefly.

First the *opera buffa*. In Chapter I (p. 37) we have explained its origin, its construction and its influence upon the *opera seria*. We remember that as early as 1639 Cardinal Rospigliosi—a later pope—wrote a comedy, *Che soffre, spera*, and had it set to music by Vergilio Mazzocchi and Mario Marazzoli. Milton was present at the performance and wrote about it in a letter. Musically it meant little—easy *secco* recitatives, few formal pieces, simple choruses. But the important thing about it was that at the side of the nobility there appeared on the stage peasants and popular figures of the time. In Florence they had already figured largely in the peasant comedy, but never in anything approaching the opera. The language is dialect and the plot already embodies two indispensable motives of the *buffa*: hunger and disguise. Rospigliosi's other comedy, *Dal male il bene*, composed by the same Marazzoli and Antonio Maria Abbatini, again places stiff nobility and merry peasantry in close juxtaposition. Tabacco, the principal character, has been called a forerunner of Figaro. That 'melancholy is bad for the health' is his leading maxim. Abbatini in this piece brings the first real finale, though it still lacks individualization. In the *Tancia* of Moriglia and Melani, which in 1657 opened in Florence the first (unsuccessful) theatre built for the performance of comic operas, there is an ensemble at the end of each act.

We remember, too, that in Venice the comic element crept timidly into the serious opera. In Cavalli's *Doriclea* a soldier curses the war and ridicules the populace's cry 'To Arms.' In Cesti's *Disgrazia d'amore* Vulcan is made to laugh. Cirillo, an obscure figure in musical history, represents the transition to Naples, the real *buffo* city, where Provenzale in 1671 brought

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out his *Schiavo della sua moglie*. His pupil, the great Scarlatti, wrote the earliest extant Neapolitan *opera buffa*. It has a Don Juan subject and its title is *Trionfo dell' onore*. Niccolò Logroscino, who has also been noticed in our first chapter, definitely established the concerted finale and the *parlando* style of recitative as permanent *buffa* features.

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, the first great genius of opera buffa, struck his first blow with *Frate innamorato* in 1732. His *Serva Padrona*, which followed in the next year, is the first of its tribe that has survived. It established the *opera buffa's* independence and its charm has not faded to this day. From more than one point of view its score is worth perusing. The little opera (at first an intermezzo) tells the story of a serving maid, Serpina, who by her coquetry and cleverness in arousing her master Pandolfo's jealousy, succeeds in making him propose marriage, thus becoming her own mistress. A man servant, Scapin (who remains silent in the play), helps the game by making love to her in disguise. Thus there are only two speaking, or singing, characters. They sing their *parlando* recitative, their simple little songs, and at the end of each of the two acts a duet. A simpler scheme could hardly be imagined. But the sincere charm, the crystal clear melodies, the precise characterization, the perfect design of the thing can only be summed up in the word genius. Except for certain archaisms it might easily be ascribed to Mozart—and not at his worst.

La Serva Padrona was performed in Naples, with reasonable success, in 1733. Eleven years later, on Oct. 4, 1746, it was played by a visiting buffo troupe at the Théâtre des Italiens in Paris and started a furore. In 1752 it was given as an intermezzo to Lully's *Acis et Galatée*, and after that the 'bouffons' were driven out of Paris by the authorities. In 1754 it was revived in a French translation at the Comédie Italienne and

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roused the buffo party into conscious existence. The *Guerre des bouffons* was kindled—with momentous consequences.

Meantime Italian composers were working the new and fertile field to capacity. Countless buffas kept pace with countless serias. Few are remembered. Jommelli had the lead for a time. Then Piccini scored an extraordinary success with his *Buona figliuola*. Everything from wine to bonnets was named after it 'alla Cecchina.' A successful rival arose in the person of Paësiello, who in turn had to yield the field to Cimarosa. Paësiello began in 1764 turning out one 'hit' after another, but his one lasting success did not come till 1782. That was *Il Barbiere de Siviglia*, which was a revered classic till Rossini had the audacity to treat the same subject. It is amusing to read how the Italians refused to accept a substitute and how timid Rossini was about the affair. He did not even dare to call his opera by its right name—and re-titled it *Almaviva*! Cimarosa's one claim to the plaudits of posterity is his *Matrimonio Segreto*, which came after Mozart's *Figaro* and might as easily be reckoned as of the post-Mozartian period. For Mozart is the next great milestone upon this road. But before we reach it other by-paths lead into the road.

II

Nothing is ever the first of its kind in musical history. Even before the visit of the Italian buffonists Paris had its comic opera. Perhaps 'musical comedy,' and sometimes 'musical pantomime' would more nearly describe it. The French called it *Vaudeville*. Nobody seems to know just what that word means and whence it came. A popular poet of the fifteenth century, Oliver Basselin, who hailed from *Vau de Vire* and wrote satires, has been said to have been respon-

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sible for it. Then again, the spelling *vauls de ville*, used as early as 1507, would point to a derivation from *valoir*—signifying something like ‘town favorites’; but then again they are called *voix de ville*—voices of the town! At any rate, town favorites they were. At the fairs of St. Gervais and St. Laurent, faubourgs of Paris, the people crowded into mere booths to hear them. The popular songs, the simple popular characters, the touching sentiments of these pieces were meat to the bourgeois, especially the pre-revolutionary bourgeois, of liberal notions and moral principles. And here was language he could understand—real dialogue, full of point and wit, no high-flown musical declamation, half drowned by the orchestra!

‘The bourgeois is the teacher and the pupil of the opéra comique, * * *’ says Bie. ‘He establishes his theatre in a sort of chesty opposition, and continues it in the same sentiment, which satisfies his thirst for freedom as well as his philistinism. He bravely opposes his own national opera [the opera of Lully and Rameau], because he understands nothing about it, and in this is supported by the encyclopedists, who translate his democracy into science.’ Now the simple little *buffo* pieces of the Italians suited his palate wonderfully. That lovely *Serva Padrona* started the rage. Translations from the Italians bridged the gap to native French productions. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, encyclopedist, philosopher, author of the ‘Social Contract,’ intellectual autocrat of France, broke the ice with his *Devin du village*, produced at the Opera in 1753; Egidio Romoaldo Duni, an Italian composer, set his *Ninette à la court* to a French libretto and was much admired. Favart produced a number of pieces full of touching sentiment. Finally along came Monsigny, Philidor and Grétry to establish the true French comic opera firmly upon its feet. These men’s works embodied elements of the vaudeville as well as of the

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opera buffa: musically they tried to maintain the level of the latter, but in place of the *secco* recitative they adopted plain dialogue. In feeling, wit and character their works were French to the core.

All this went on not without considerable rivalry. Paris was in a combative mood. The *Comédie Italienne* first tried to draw the French bourgeois away from his booth theatres in the faubourgs, by offering him a similar diet—vaudevilles and *intermèdes*;—then it managed partially to suppress its modest rivals so that at times they could only produce pantomimes or marionette shows. Peace did not come till 1762, when the Salle Favart, later the Opéra Comique, was established and made to unite both factions. The official Opéra (the Académie) opposed the whole business, of course, and, having already expelled the Italian buffonists, it managed for some time to monopolize all operatic performances with continuous music. Hence the use of dialogue was not altogether a matter of choice with the composers of opéra comique.

Rousseau, 'the philosophic founder of a most un-philosophic art species,' established the type that the others emulated. He was neither dramatist nor musician; omniscience was his conceit. But he had a most sensitive finger upon the pulse of his period. And he was the demigod of Monsieur Bourgeois. Sentiment and satire in just proportions was his formula. Love, told in the simple accents of song, was a French favorite since the days of Adam de la Hâle and his *Robin et Marion*. Now Robin and Marion have become Colin and Colette. They are in love, and jealous. Finally the village soothsayer conciliates them by his magic arts and all are happy. But—there is also a courtier who pursues the peasant girl and who yields her up only upon the pressing entreaties of her country lover. That is the point of appeal for the bourgeois and the *sauce piquante* of the whole piece.

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The plot of the *Devin du village* is the theme of which all the others of the school are the variations. The bad aristocrat and the good peasant. The depravities of town life and the virtues of pastoral simplicity. The shams of culture and the genuineness of plain living. Finally the disguise of the countryman as city fop and *vice versa*. Love and Irony were the two souls of the genre. Like the opera buffa, the *comique* began to parody the high rhetoric, the artificiality, the virtuosity of the serious opera. Now the miser became the subject of mockery. Poverty was set up as a virtue. Servants and masters were interchanged; surprise revelations—seeming peasants turning out to be nobles, supposed brothers and sisters that are not related at all—lead to marriages that seem to set aside all accepted laws and conventions. One went further: thieves, inebriates and gamblers were celebrated, the prison was mocked as a sign of tyranny. Liberty and license, fraternity and equality—with the plain man at the top—these were the ‘ideals’ that the new genre set before a gullible public.

Now for the music. It needed little to please. The success of a piece that stood for truth, with a bit of irony for spice, as against convention and oratorical pretense, was assured. Pretty little songs of love, of pastoral bliss, sparkling couplets with a topical turn, dance tunes with snappy rhythms, tenderness, simplicity, catchiness—these were the requisites. Of such Rousseau’s *Devin* is made. The others followed suit, but were better musicians. Duni—partly Italian, partly French in manner—contributes a classic of its kind—*La laitière* (1768)—with the popular refrain ‘*Le pot au lait versé par terre.*’ Monsigny (1729-1817) brought his *Déserteur*, a touching little story of a soldier who deserts in a fit of jealousy, is condemned to be shot but is saved by his sweetheart’s appeal to the king. It is maudlin but full of pretty little songs

GRÉTRY AND PHILIDOR

and has plenty of wit. Its pathetic *Adieu Louise* and some other things in it are still alive.

Grétry (1741-1813) is worthy of more notice. He was not a profound musician, but far superior to his predecessors. He came from Liège in Belgium, went to Rome to study but couldn't develop enough application to master counterpoint. He abandoned the church for the stage, made a little success in Rome and went straightway to Voltaire for a libretto. He didn't get it but was advised to go to Paris, where he struck all sorts of difficulties. Among others he ran into Rousseau, who seemed anxious to patronize him but was so offended when Grétry wanted to help him across a street that was torn up, that he never spoke to him again. All this we read in Grétry's entertaining memoirs, where he also promulgates his musico-dramatic principles with great clearness. He lived through the revolution and speaks of the exciting times—from the standpoint of a musician. His opera *Richard, Cœur de Lion* (1784), is still famous for the air *O Richard, O mon Roi*, that on one historic occasion raised a veritable riot, of which we read in Carlyle's 'French Revolution.'

Richard and *Raoul Barbe-Bleue* were internationally popular for a long time. The former is still in the French repertoire. But *Le Tableau Parlant*, *Les deux avarés* (1770), *Zémire et Azor* (1771), *L'Amant jaloux* (1778) are mere 'history'; though, as Streatfeild says, they are 'models of lightness and brilliancy.' Grétry wrote numerous opéras comiques and also some grand operas. Several isolated selections are often sung in the concert room and usually delight audiences with their fine grace and natural simplicity. He certainly exerted a tremendous influence on the next generation of opéra comique; Boieldieu, Auber, Adam and Isouard are almost unthinkable without him.

Philidor (1726-95) was a great chess player—probably the greatest of his time,—wrote a famous analysis of

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the game and received a pension from the London Chess Club, where he celebrated most of his victories. He came of a musical family and tried to get a musical post by composing a *Lauda Jerusalem* in 1745. At thirty-three he suddenly appeared as an opera composer and conquered the field of opéra comique for several decades. His gift for melody was not great but his musicianship surpassed that of Grétry. His 'Tom Jones,' on an English subject, brought the startling innovation of an *cappella* quartet. Bie makes a great deal of his one 'grand' opera, *Ernelinde, princesse de Norvège* (1767), which in a sense concluded a period of French opera.

III

When the Italian opera had reached the zenith of its inconsequential glory, while it absorbed the attention of the fashionable world and carried away in its treacherous swirl the ambitions of even some of the most talented composers, while the conflicts of a Handel and a Buononcini, the rivalry of a Faustina and a Cuzzoni, catering to the appetites of a sated public at unheard-of prices, agitated the entire society of the world's capital, there happened in London an amazing thing. Handel's often-told struggles with his rivals were at their height, fortunes were risked on either side, royal favors, capital, literary prestige, artistic reputations were thrown into the scales. Once more the balance favored Handel, when this thing happened and turned the whole business topsy-turvy. Mr. John Gay and Dr. John Christopher Pepusch (another Anglicized German musician) produced what appeared at first sight to be an ordinary vulgar street comedy, with plenty of well-known street tunes thrown in to liven it up. But the public—not only the public of the East End, whose own members were reproduced as

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characters of the play, but the *haute volée* of the Haymarket and the Royal Academy—ran to it night after night, whistled the tunes and quoted the gibes. In the course of a few weeks the Haymarket was dark, Handel was a bankrupt and the Italian songbirds had taken passage southward.

This was the 'Beggar's Opera,' denounced as vulgar, immoral, cheap and what not, but sweeping the world into the grasp of its popularity, besides giving impetus to art forms that are extant to-day—for the German *Singspiel*, the *Liederspiel*, the English musical comedy can all be traced back to it. More important still—the old 'serious' opera could never be taken seriously again; it was all but ridiculed out of existence, the fires of liberty spread everywhere and the knell of false pathos was sounded.

The important thing to remember about the 'Beggar's Opera' (which should be more than a name to the music-lover) is that it was primarily intended to be a parody of the Italian opera. But while laying bare its absurdities so patently that the man in the street could understand, it also pointed the way to reform. Its 'heroes' and 'heroines' are thieves and women of the street, the very dregs of humanity, and they prove themselves quite capable of the same sentiments as the strutting demigods and armored knights of the real opera. Though their traits are drawn with merciless truth, they still command sympathy. Their language is that of the common man, East End London English in place of the Italian that few could understand. Their melodies—and here is the wonder—are all drawn from the pure and inexhaustible well of folk-song; a natural, true and charming music, whose power, in the hands of an adroit musician like Pepusch, was fully revealed, perhaps for the first time. Here were tunes that every one must have known, and they expressed the meaning of their words far better than the

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sophisticated art of a Handel or a Scarlatti, with its roulades and tremolos and all the machinery of *opera seria*, could do.

As in the French comic opera, the recitative was supplanted by the spoken word, and the whole thing was brought within the range of common understanding. The facts that the work contained many satires of topical interest, that it embodied an attack on Walpole and his corrupt government, and that Pepusch's great rival Handel did not go unscathed, are of secondary importance to us of to-day. The work opens with a prologue stating the author's purpose. It is amusing enough to merit quoting in part, with the remark that the piece carries out minutely what it purports. The prologue introduces a Beggar, who is the supposed author, and the Player—or Producer, as we should say.

'Beggar: This piece I own was originally writ for the celebrating of the marriage of James Chanter and Moll Lay, two most excellent ballad-singers. I have introduced the similes that are in all the celebrated *Operas*: the Swallow, the Moth, the Bee, the Ship, the Flower, &c. Besides I have a prison scene which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic. As to the parts, I have observed such a nice impartiality to our ladies * that it is impossible for either of them to take offense. I hope I may be forgiven that I have not made my Opera unnatural throughout, like those in vogue, for I have no Recitative: excepting this, as I have consented to have neither Prologue nor Epilogue, it must be allowed an opera in all its forms. The piece indeed hath been heretofore frequently represented by ourselves in our great room in *St. Giles's*, so that I cannot too often acknowledge your charity in bringing it now on the stage.

'Player: But I see 'tis time for us to withdraw, the

* An allusion to the rivalry between the two leading prima donnas of the day, Faustina and Cuzzoni.

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Actors are preparing to begin. Play away the Overture. *Exeunt.*'

The overture begins. Even that is based on a popular song: 'One evening having lost my way,' which was then known in England as 'Walpole, or the Happy Clown' (Walpole being the chief butt of Gay's gibes). The tune is so cleverly developed that later, when its significance was no longer understood, it was still commended by German musicians as a notable orchestral piece. Its workmanship reminds one of Handel.

The plot of the piece is briefly this: Peacham's * gang of burglars has as its captain and most daring member Macheath. Macheath clandestinely weds Polly, the beautiful daughter of Peacham, who is very wroth over the affair, because of its financial aspects. He proposes to deliver Macheath to the police, so that Polly shall become a widow and inherit Macheath's property, while he himself profits by the usual forty pounds reward. Polly, who really loves Macheath, reveals the nefarious scheme to him and urges him to flee. But, lingering too long at an orgy in the gangsters' resort, he is arrested by Peacham and his friend Lockit, the jailer of Newgate. The latter's daughter, Lucy, also claims Macheath as her husband. She and Polly meet in the prison and have a violent encounter. Lucy finally helps Macheath to escape, but with the help of an old female procurer he is rearrested, and condemned to death. Four other women besides Lucy and Polly come to take leave of him, but in the last moment he is pardoned—for, as the Player says to the Beggar, an opera must always end happily, regardless of the method by which such a dénouement is managed. Macheath finally chooses Polly, in a song and dance which closes the 'opera.'

The subtlety of the parody, consisting, not of obvious imitations of the current operatic style, but the use of simple popular songs in such a way that the allusion is

* Peacham, the chief character, had an original in real life: Jonathan Wild, a notorious criminal who was hanged in 1725, after having conducted a thriving business as the organizer of a burglar's gang which delivered its booty up to him, while he himself acted as informer to the police, which paid him £40 a head for the criminals he delivered into the hands of the law—these being, of course, all the gangsters who would not do his bidding.

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always clear, is nothing short of admirable. Every form of the stereotyped opera is imitated by the use of these popular tunes. Catch phrases or lines of the original texts of the songs are so altered as to apply to the situation in the most apt and ludicrous fashion. Thus Macheath when he is caught between the cross fire of the questions of his two rival loves, not wishing to commit himself to either, sings:

‘How happy could I be with either
Were t’other charmer away,
But while you thus tease me together
To neither a word will I say.’

Now the original words of the song relate the story of a young man who wagered that he could pass all the watchmen of the city without speaking to any of them, and the refrain consists of the words:

‘And never a word he would say.’

The song and its words were of course well known to the audience. Their application, as that of similar others, must have set it to roaring.

Presently these melodies became popular in quite another way. Their musical value was recognized for the first time, and numerous arrangements of them for various instruments appeared. Young ladies who would have thought it bad manners to admit their knowledge of the song itself, now incorporated the transcriptions into their repertoires.

The vogue of the ‘Beggar’s Opera’ was enormous. Numerous imitations sprang up. Miss Fenton, the original Polly, enthralled one of England’s richest peers and became the Duchess of Bolton. A sequel to the opera, entitled ‘Polly,’ emigrated to America and was embellished with Indian episodes! Flood upon flood of ballad operas followed in its wake. Some of them

Scene from Act III of the 'Beggar's Opera'
From an engraving by Hogarth





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are made up of folk-tunes, some of imitations, some of both. In some the interpolation of French *chansons* indicates degeneration. Gay, the author of the 'Beggar's Opera,' collaborated with Charles Coffey on 'The Devil to Pay'—the most important of the many successors to the first ballad-opera. This was an arrangement of an old English farce by Jevon (1686), which in its new form was divided in two parts, 'The Wives Metamorphosed' and 'The Merry Cobbler.' The first is the story of the magic exchange of a rich bad woman for a poor good one, the second that of a churlish shoemaker made tractable. This was destined to become the bridge to the *singspiel* of Germany.

IV

Germany, like England, was obsessed by the Italian idea. Even German operas were Italian in all but the text. Keiser's work in Hamburg did not progress on the path of nationalism and found no sequel; Schürmann of Wolfenbüttel wrote many operas, and many other native composers raised the hopes of their generation, but the creation of a true German opera needed different impulses. It has been said that of all art forms the comic opera is always the most characteristically national. As we have seen, the truth of that maxim was borne out in France and in England (for the 'Beggar's Opera,' whatever its musical merits, was the first truly English opera). We shall see it borne out again in the case of Germany.

In 1743 an operatic troupe in Berlin produced a translation of Gay and Coffey's 'The Devil to Pay.' Brock, the first translator of 'Julius Cæsar,' was responsible for it. Shortly after, another troupe performed the piece in its two parts—under the title *Der Teufel ist los*. Koch, the head of the troupe, with Weisse re-

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vised the text and the music was by Standfuss, who is thus the real creator of the *singspiel*. It consisted of simple melodies, with an occasional Italian *buffo* flavor and realistic touches in the accompaniment. Meantime Sedaine in Paris had translated the same piece into French, with the title *Le Diable à quatre*, and after Standfuss' death Weisse again revised his German version after the model of this French one. This time Johann Adam Hiller composed the music. That started the German *singspiel* in earnest.

Hiller (1728-1804) was a good and conscientious musician but hardly a genius. His importance in history is out of proportion with his intrinsic worth. He was the son of a poor cantor and by dint of hard labor raised himself to a position of importance. He got to Leipzig in the capacity of tutor, worked under old Doles, Bach's successor, as flutist and as singer, studied at the university and prospered. He revived the subscription concerts, interrupted by the Seven Years' War, at his own risk and when they were permanently established in the Gewandhaus he became the first conductor and laid the foundation of their fame. He took hold of the *singspiel* idea with the conviction that he was accomplishing a great reform. His idea was that it is unnatural to let characters representing common people sing anything but the simplest songs, but people of rank might indulge in more or less high-flown arias. Thus each class had its musical dialect. In keeping a just balance between the two it was mighty easy to fall between two stools. Hiller did. Frequently he is more Italian than German. But his songs, the simple German songs, are the beginning of the flourishing period of the German *Lied*. By them Goethe was actually fascinated into writing his exquisite simple lyrics in the folk-manner that are the pride of German poetry to this day. But Hiller himself remained a bourgeois to his dying day. In Bie's words, 'He plays the rôle of

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the German Michel, who passes off his night-cap for a crown.'

So far, it will be noted, the history of the *singspiel* precedes the days of the *opéra comique*. The vaudeville is in its heyday and imitates the ballad opera by livening up its texts with folk-songs and parodies of Italian arias. Now the Germans imitate the French in their turn. Everybody imitates everybody else. 'The Italian Ciampi wrote his *Bertoldo in corte*, after it Favart modelled his *Ninette à la cour*; after that Weisse and Hiller wrote their *Lottchen am Hofe*. Finally the story went back to Italy and at the end it probably influenced Beaumarchais' *Figaro*.'

Favart's *Fée Urgèle*, a fairy opera that prefigures Mozart's texts in various details, was adapted by Schiebler with the title *Lisuart und Diriolette*. Hiller composed 'proto-romantic music' for it in rather Italian style and made a 'hit.' This was in 1767. In the same year came *Lottchen am Hofe*, also after Favart and with the typical comic opera subject—bad courtiers, good peasant; seduction of a peasant girl by a nobleman, etc., etc.,—not a far cry to *Figaro*. *Die Liebe auf dem Lande* (1770) was based on Favart's *Annette et Lubin* and other pieces. *Der Dorfbarbier* and *Die Jagd* followed closely on its heels. The latter became the greatest success of the Koch troupe, and as late as 1830 Lortzing thought it worthy of a revision. It represents a king, in disguise, among his people. He is touched by their loyalty, rewards the virtuous and punishes the evil-doers. Its score has an orchestral storm, and an intermezzo with open scene. Hannchen's song '*Als ich auf meiner Bleiche ein Stückchen Garn begoss*' became famous the world over. The work was still performed in 1890.

Hiller was a man after the German middle-class heart. He did many pretty things and fairly ran over with homely sentiment, but of the sparkle of his French

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confrères he had nothing. Their clever parodies, their piquant wit, their charming naughtiness was over his head. His re-hashing of their subjects was clumsy. But some of the elements were there, combined with the Italian *buffo* style and the English popular song model. These, flavored with native sentiment and good German musicianship, made the *singspiel*. Hiller had done for Germany what Rousseau and Monsigny and the others had done for France. But he was not a philosopher or revolutionist, and he had not seen Paris.

Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814) had not only seen it, but was commissioned to write two operas for it—*Tamerlan* and *Panthée*, but before he could complete them Frederick the Great died and he was ordered back to Berlin. Somewhat of a revolutionist, too, he was dismissed by Frederick William II for it. Later he ran against Jérôme Napoléon, who made him return from his refuge during the French occupation and accept a conductor's post in Cassel. Afterwards Reichardt tried to get Beethoven to take the place. Finally he was allowed to end his life in a government sinecure—salt works inspector at Halle.

Reichardt wrote a lot of *singspiele* for Berlin and Potsdam. They are all forgotten. But his songs are not, and they are an important link between the dry Berlin 'odes' and the lyric bursts of Schubert. Goethe thought a lot of him and was probably responsible for Reichardt's turning the *singspiel* into a *liederspiel*, that is, a play in which the action is carried on entirely by the spoken word, only the lyrical passages being set in simple folk-song style. The first of this species was Reichardt's *Liebe und Treue* (1801). His immediate successor was Friedrich Heinrich Himmel with his *Frohsinn und Schwärmerei* (1801) and *Fanchon* (1804).

Another development needs to be recorded. Georg Benda (1722-95) in his *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Medea*

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supported the dialogue by a highly colored orchestral accompaniment throughout—a form of art generally called *melodrame*. Mozart is said to have been delighted with the effect, when he heard one of Benda's *singspiele* at Mannheim.

Johann Christoph Vogel (1756-88), an enthusiastic follower of Gluck, and Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748-98), the teacher of Beethoven, are names that might be mentioned in this connection. Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-99) is more important than either. His *Doktor und Apotheker* is still worthy of notice. But first we should mention the foundation of a national *singspiel* theatre by Emperor Joseph II. Not that he was especially fond of German opera—he much preferred the Italian—but the nationalistic wave was on the rise and a national playhouse had just been established. Ignaz Umlauf's (1756-96) *Die Bergknappen* opened the house. It had little in common with the *singspiele* of the North German composers, Hiller, etc., was polyphonic, heavy and old-fashioned and almost devoid of popular songs. But it raised the hopes of Germanists. Mozart's *Entführung* came next—and of that later.

In 1786 Ditters' *Doktor und Apotheker* saw the boards of the national *singspiel* theatre in Vienna. It is still known in Germany. Ditters was one of the Vienna classics and barely escapes being a great one. His style shows it: diatonic sequences, developments in true instrumental style and musical ensembles. There is many a pretty song and especially jolly duet. There is one between Krautmann and Gallus which is still famous, in which they discuss the value of doctors. The opening quintet Bie compares to the folkish choruses of Smetana's 'Bartered Bride.' The piece has a good deal of the Italian *buffo* style, even coloratura and the conventional *da capo* form. There is a concerted finale at the end of each act, with many rhyth-

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mic and dynamic ingenuities. On the whole the opera is hardly pure *singspiel*. Like the rest of Ditters' stage works—*Hieronymus Knicker*, *Liebe im Narrenhaus* (1787), etc.—it is typical of the time. The type leans more and more toward the operetta and the texts are often unspeakably silly. Schenk's *Dorfbarbier* was a great success in its time and an example of the Vienna school at its worst. Wenzel Müller, with his *Schwestern von Prag*, is better. Some of his comic songs are still remembered—they point to the Viennese operetta of a later time.

All in all it was high time for the great man to come along, to unite the good in all the various strands and consign the rest to oblivion. In both the *opera buffa* and the *singspiel* the saviour was at hand—that was the double mission of Mozart.

V

Mozart's operatic career is fascinating history. His whole life represents a struggle to write opera—'serious opera'—after the Italian model, for his operatic influences were unmistakably Italian. This almost insensate operatic ambition of an essentially 'absolute' musician for Italian opera is one of the paradoxes of history. His genius did not lie in that sphere and a kindly fate constantly forced him away from it. Reared in the traditions of German instrumental music, he reached the operatic field in roundabout fashion; the very spontaneity of his nature led him to pass over the 'grand' models of Italy, from Traetta to Piccini. But the lighter side—Lampugnani and his *buffo* friends—influenced him insensibly. He found in their compact forms, in their varied movements, in the polyphonic suggestions of their ensembles, something akin to his symphonic instincts. And there he was to find

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his mission. Gluck had reformed the *seria*, his austerity, his didactic dramaticism left Mozart untouched; Mozart, as if by instinct, turned to the *buffa*, deepened its meaning, brought to it polyphony, symphonic form and orchestral technique and so created a new type—the ‘serious *buffa*,’ the truly classic opera.

The kindly fate that directed Mozart's artistic footsteps played its first prank in 1768 when the composer was twelve. Messmer, the ‘magnetic’ doctor, had married wealth and possessed a magnificent country house near Vienna, with a little theatre in the garden where he gave little plays and song-plays for his friends. Little Mozart, then visiting Vienna as a ‘wonder-child,’ was asked to write one. They gave him a trifle called *Bastien und Bastienne*, which was the German version of a parody on Rousseau's *Devin du village*, the first French comic opera. It is the simple story of a peasant couple who doubt each other's love, and, by the help of a supposed conjurer, are reassured and reunited. This was Mozart's contribution to the Hiller school of *singspiel*, the descendant of the ‘Beggar's Opera,’ and it became the progenitor of *Die Entführung* and ‘The Magic Flute.’ Pretty melodies, deftly put together—the student may examine the score.

But something else had gone before—a real *opera buffa*, ordered by Emperor Joseph II but kept from the imperial boards by Italian intrigues. The title was *La finta semplice*, and it was performed in Salzburg in 1769. Another score for the student to examine. In 1774-75 followed its immediate successor, *La finta giardiniera*, ordered for the Munich carnival of 1775 by Maximilian III. It is full of love intrigues and disguises and—charming music. It is all very significant, but not in line with Mozart's ambition, *opera seria*. Four years earlier Milan had acclaimed him a new *maestro*—or *maestrino* rather—of that species, for in

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1770 the youthful composer had set the town by the ears with a real serious opera, *Mitridate, rè di Ponto*, and again in 1772 with *Lucio Silla*. In the same year, too, he had written *Il sogno di Scipio* for the induction of the new archbishop in Salzburg. And then not another until 1781. In a letter to his father, written three years before, we read of his ardent desire to write '*seria*, not *buffa*.' And yet *Idomeneo* (performed 1781), the result of that desire, may be dismissed with fewer words than any of the others. Some have considered it his finest work, but, in Oskar Bie's words, it is 'a weak afterbirth of the French-Italian style-fusion which Gluck had already accomplished.' It brought nothing new except a fine orchestra after the Mannheim model. It was a *tour de force* of genius, but not the fulfillment of an artistic purpose.

And here, for the sake of completeness, let us mention the only remaining *seria* of Mozart's, *La Clemenza di Tito* (1791), one of his last works, which seems to ignore the achievements of the glorious decade that went before it, the period of *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. *Tito* was written for Prague, where the two aforementioned masterpieces had been enthusiastically received. It was ordered for the coronation of Leopold II as Bohemian king. Mozart was ailing and hurried—some of the music was composed in the post-wagon! Stendhal tells us that it called forth tears irresistibly—eighteenth-century tears, trained to respond to Metastasio pathos, perhaps. It leaves us cold to-day. And for Mozart's sake let us not dwell on it. His glory lies elsewhere. As far as the opera is concerned his achievements are bound up with the history of two species, neither of which is of the race of *Mitridate*. We refer to the *opera buffa* and the *singspiel*. *La finta giardiniera* was of the former breed, *Bastien und Bastienne* of the latter. His great works of either class are these: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1781); *La*

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nozze di Figaro (1785); *Don Giovanni* (1787); *Così fan tutte* (1790); *Die Zauberflöte* (1791).

The 'Abduction from the Seraglio' (*Entführung aus dem Serail*), a comic *singspiel* in three acts, was first performed July 12, 1782, in the Nationaltheater of Vienna, upon express command of Emperor Joseph II, who in 1778 had instituted the National Singspiel there. Without this imperial intervention the work would probably have failed of performance, since intrigues had effectually prevented its appearance so far. The National Theatre had thus far subsisted on weak imitations of French and Italian comic operas; *Die Entführung* saved it from utter oblivion.

The text was written by C. F. Bretzner, who originally (1781) wrote it for J. André. Gottlieb Stephanie revised it in part for Mozart. The opera is also known as *Belmonte und Constanze*, after the chief characters of the play. Constanze, the beloved of Belmonte, a European noble, has come into the power of Pasha Selim; Belmonte's servant Pedrillo is also held in slavery there and performs the duties of garden watch. Belmonte finds him there and so learns Constanze's fate, whom he determines to deliver. He succeeds in disguising himself and becomes architect for Selim, to the great chagrin of Osmin, the steward. Pasha Selim sues for Constanze's love and Osmin for Blondchen's (the maid's)—both without success. Pedrillo assists in the liberation by getting Osmin intoxicated, but all four are caught because Osmin is prematurely sobered. The Pasha magnanimously pardons the fugitives in the end.

Of all the master's operas, the *Entführung* has enjoyed the largest vogue in German theatres. But its first reception was cool. The emperor's judgment was thus expressed: 'Too much science, and a great number of notes, my dear Mozart.' The reply of Mozart, 'Just as many as are necessary, Sire,' has become historic. The further opinion that 'Mozart had a great deal of talent for instrumental music, but not for vocal,' may be partially justified, since, while the orchestration is accomplished with consummate mastery, the

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vocal pieces have not the fluency of conception and the varied grace which distinguish the later operas. Among the most telling pieces are the overture, the chorus of the slaves of the Seraglio, and the 'battle' duet between Osmin and Belmonte. Also the two *buffo* airs of Osmin and the quartet, which ends the second act, the orchestration of which seems to foreshadow *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro*. Since the female rôles were written for exceptional voices, they are often transposed and rather mercilessly cut.

VI

Though nearly four years elapsed between the production of *Entführung* and that of *Figaro*, conditions in Vienna had apparently not changed, intrigue was still rife and again an imperial reprimand was needed to bring the refractory singers to order. But the success of the opera, upon its performance, May 1, 1786, was decisive. It surpassed everything in Mozart's career thus far and should have meant prosperity for the rest of it. But the time and conditions were against it. The selection of the subject was a masterstroke. Beaumarchais' hero had long been a popular figure, and since the appearance of the two plays, *Le Barbier de Seville* and *Le mariage de Figaro* (1774), the former in direct defiance of Louis XVI's interdict, opera composers had made free use of the subject. The most notable was perhaps Paësiello's *Barbiere*, popular till the appearance of Rossini's version. *Figaro* was popular because it made a hero out of a workingman and chastised the nobleman. The political significance of this piece is apparent when the revolution then imminent is taken into account. Little or none of that significance is preserved in operatic versions. However, Da Ponte's Italian libretto, *Le nozze di Figaro*, undertaken

Mozart at the Berlin Production of 'Entführung,' 1785
From an old print



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upon Mozart's own initiation, preserves all the essential traits of Beaumarchais' second comedy.

Being a sequel to 'The Barber of Seville' and employing the same principal characters, the plot of the earlier comedy will serve as exposition to the second. It will be found in connection with our review of Rossini's opera (p. 139 f.). For the present purpose it will suffice to know that it tells of the successful campaign of Count Almaviva for the hand of Rosina, the beautiful ward of Dr. Bartolo, who upon her majority hopes to marry her himself, quite in the usual manner of elderly guardians. Figaro, the barber, who, by virtue of his profession, has entry to all houses, is instrumental in the consummation of the intrigue, and Basilio, the music teacher, as well as Susanna, her maid, have been made accomplices. It should be added, too, that Marcellina, the discarded mistress of Bartolo, had been entrusted with the bringing up of Rosina, which may be taken into account for her ready acquiescence to the adventure.

At the opening of Mozart's *Figaro*, the count and Rosina have been married some time. Figaro is employed as valet, Marcellina is also taken into the count's service, and so has Basilio, ostensibly as music teacher, but really as the count's agent in pursuit of love intrigues, for alas, his faithfulness is decidedly below par. Susanna, the countess' chamber-maid, is at present the particular object of his attentions. Figaro and Susanna are to be married (in the opening scene they are measuring their prospective apartments); meantime, the count, while supposedly propitiating the match, is plotting to prevent it. Figaro is jealous—but not more so than the count himself, who suspects Cherubino, the page (old enough to be dangerous, but young enough to enjoy the licenses of youth with the fair sex), of flirting with the countess. He has been dismissed and given an officer's patent in the count's regiment. His discovery by the count in Susanna's room, where he has been indirectly suing for the countess' intercession, seals his fate. His expected departure delights the jealous Figaro no less than the count himself. In joyful, marked rhythm he sings to him of the joys of a soldier's life. But the page is not so quickly disposed of. In Act III he is called to the assistance of the countess, to whom Susanna has just unbosomed herself. He is to be disguised so as to impersonate Susanna in the rendezvous arranged with the count. Meantime the latter's attention is to be turned away from Figaro's wedding by an anonymous letter (sent by Fi-

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garo), calculated to arouse his jealousy by warning him that his wife has an appointment with another man. While Cherubino is trying on his feminine disguise the count demands admission to the apartment. Cherubino is hidden in an adjoining room and there upsets a chair, thus arousing the count's suspicions. The countess avers that it is Susanna dressing herself, and the count, deterred from entering, leaves and locks the outer door. Before he returns, Cherubino, released by Susanna, has escaped through a window. The count returns and commands Cherubino to come forth, for the countess has already confessed his presence to the count and pleaded for his pardon. Both are surprised, therefore, at finding only Susanna, who answers the summons. The count, persuaded that it was all a hoax to test him, is forced to apologize. But the gardener, appearing to protest against a man's jumping on his flower pots, obliges Figaro, who has entered and been forced to confess himself the author of the anonymous letter, to save the situation by saying that it was he himself who thus unceremoniously left the room. The presence of Cherubino's patent, which has been picked up by the gardener, he explains with ready wit, presenting it to the count for the affixing of the missing seal.

III But now the count's own plot begins to entangle Figaro. Dr. Bartolo, who bears the valet a deep grudge for having robbed him of his ward—now the countess—is the count's tool. He and Marcellina enter with a breach of promise claim against Figaro, who it seems is in Marcellina's debt, and of course the matter is brought to trial before the count. The latter, while confident of success with Susanna, fears her treachery after overhearing a conversation with Figaro, in which she remarks that the cause is won before the trial. The case is decided against Figaro, but the sudden discovery that Figaro is a son of Marcellina by Dr. Bartolo saves him from the catastrophe and induces his newly-discovered parents to marry and legitimize his birth. The double wedding of Figaro and Susanna and of Bartolo and Marcellina is to take place at once. —
The countess dictates to Susanna a letter to the count (purporting to be the maid's own) arranging for a tête-à-tête for that evening, and during the wedding dance Figaro hands it to the count. The two women have, however, exchanged attires. **IV** → The countess, as Susanna, meets the count, while Susanna, as countess, meets Figaro, who through the ingenious Barbarina has gotten wind of Susanna's assignation, and believes it to be genuine. He quickly discovers his mistake and for a

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moment turns it to his own account in a charming counter-flirtation. The count, after making love to his own wife under the delusion that she is Susanna, discovers Figaro with the supposed countess and, caught at his own game, is forced to forgive and be forgiven. Incidentally, Cherubino has once more figured as the arch-flirt, having attempted to kiss the supposed Susanna—in fact, the countess herself.

A plot so complex and full of detail is not easily followed, especially with the added encumbrance of music. We are indeed tempted at every point to forget the story and abandon ourselves to the beguiling charm of Mozart's melodies. Such a wealth of imagination, such a sheer prodigality of genius, is rarely, if ever, bestowed on a single work. But the most remarkable feature of the work is its display of Mozart's wonderful power of characterization. Heretofore, it is true, opera had contained character types, but not *individuals*. Often they were merely types of singers—nothing more than the theatrical puppets of a stock pattern. Mozart's are living characters, their very being lives and breathes in every phrase of the music they sing. In this respect *Figaro* is a landmark in the history of opera. All the earlier attempts—Scarlatti, Leo, Jommelli, Gluck—fade into insignificance before this finished example of musical portraiture, the technique of which Mozart was the first thoroughly to master.

The overture of *Figaro*, a rapid, buoyant movement, has been aptly called a '*buffo sonata*.' The project of a slow middle section seems to have been swept from Mozart's mind by the very rush of the thing. The duet of Susanna and Figaro opens the action: she tries her hat, he measures the room in which they are to live as man and wife. The action of measuring is reflected in a charming progressive theme, to which a second, the motive of their joy, is added. The whole is a sparkling web of rhythm and melody that sets the 'tone' of the whole opera. Mozart likes duets; he adds another

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right away: Figaro's invitation to the dance—minuet, presto—more sparkling rhythms. Bartolo's 'malicious' aria with its creeping triplets is a real Mozartian character study—of a fawning, malicious intriguer. Marcellina and Susanna now have a duet, a deliciously silly thing, all curtsies and compliments. But Marcellina has no real character—she is the soubrette and nothing more. Not so Cherubino, the most captivating figure in the opera. His '*Non so più*' is one of Mozart's great inspirations, a God-given melody, a mellifluous incarnation of tender, erotic youth. The trio of Basilio, the Count and Susanna is next. Basilio's '*sospetto*' motive is the centre of it: it is taken up by the count as he discovers the page, and repeated, a fifth higher, at the end, as a malicious sneer by Basilio himself. A graceful peasants' chorus and the 'military' aria of Figaro, who has his little joke with the banished page, give us jolly march and dance rhythms and lovely orchestral diversions.

But Cherubino has not gone. After the Countess' short aria (really a dialogue with the orchestra), he reappears with his lovely canzona, '*Voi che sapete*,' which leaves us mute with wonder. How can such simplicity touch us so deeply? Is it the melody (we do think it one of the most beautiful ever conceived by man), or is it Mozart's lovely lace-work of orchestral voices?—wood-winds and strings, but especially wood-winds, and most especially the clarinet! Susanna, as she disguises Cherubino, sings an aria (every aria is a gem and so is this one); the Count's arrival induces another trio, full of suggestive imitations and characterizations. It ends with the disappearance of Cherubino through the window, and leads into the first Finale—'the richest and most beautiful finale that had thus far been written, and still unique to-day,' says Bie. This masterpiece is divided into periods that correspond to the situations. First, the Count and Coun-

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tess before the door: contrasted character. Second, Susanna's entrance in place of the expected page: surprise and ragged rhythms. Third, reconciliation: tender melody and atmosphere. Fourth, Figaro's entrance. His first melody skips along in C, while another more sustained one in G emphasizes the serious side of the situation. Both of them proceed to develop the action in good, straight sonatina form. (Mozart, the dramatic wizard with the musical wand!) Fifth period, the drunken gardener enters and tells of Cherubino's escape: embarrassment and confusion. Sixth, Bartolo, Basilio and Marcellina enter: more confusion. The count's '*silenzio*' establishes order: two parties are set off; in the end they combine again, but the characters remain distinct.

In the second act there are scenic disguises, but musical truth. The Count's scene with Susanna is full of real feeling, and so is his aria, which follows. Mozart has discovered his noble heart. And, what is more momentous, he has discovered how to be serious in an *opera buffa*. 'The true humanity to which no *seria* could lead him he has discovered in the *buffa*.' Here is where the German genius enters and gives a 'soul' to all this Southern lightheartedness and grace.

Let us hurry through the rest of it. A sextet follows the 'trial' scene. Then the Countess and Susanna write their letter to the Count in the most inspired of duets, filled with tender feelings and earnest thoughts that pass from one's lips to the other's in caressing contours. A 'Rose chorus,' a march, a beautiful little ballet, the 'needle song' of Barbarina and two more pretty but insignificant trifles (by Marcellina and Basilio) follow. The Garden scene, too, is trifling in its buffoonery, until Susanna arrives and breathes her touching recitative, followed by a wonderfully beautiful aria. And the second Finale, with its disguises, is once more a typical product of the eighteenth century. It is tomfoolery

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clothed in thin Mozartian veils. But the Count, regenerated, now asks the Countess' pardon in the melody that has with truth been called 'super-earthly.' All the characters take it up—are caught up in it, rather—as this divinely musical comedy whirls to its end.

VII

Don Giovanni ('Don Juan'), of Spanish origin, like *Figaro*, is a traditional character of ancient ancestry—perhaps even of folk-lore extraction. The first poetic representation (as *Don Juan Terrorio*, 1634) was made by Gabriel Tellez, a Spanish poet writing under the pseudonym of Tirso de Molina. He is the symbol of the inconstancy of man's love, the fickle flirt, who even when sincere at the moment can be trusted only to shift his affection to the next fair one that meets his eye. He is not a mere sensual libertine, and hence is incapable of regeneration.

The subject has had innumerable poetic, epic and dramatic presentations, some by the foremost poets in various tongues, Italian (Giliberti), French (Molière, *Le festin de Pierre*, Corneille, *ditto*), English ('The Libertine Destroyed,' by Shadwell, 1676; and 'Don Juan' by Byron, 1818-1823), German (various poets, including Lenau, who only sketched it), Spanish (Zorilla, 1850, *Don Juan Terrorio*, entirely in the modern spirit) and Russian (Poushkin, rearranged for an opera by Dargomijsky), not to mention the various librettos for operas, which began with Le Tellier's *Le festin de Pierre* in 1713. This and all other settings, of course, pale into insignificance before Mozart's, based upon the Da Ponte's version, which follows the main outlines of the original story and perpetuates its character-types: Don Juan; Donna Anna, the faithful daughter; Ottavio, her noble lover; Isabella, renamed Elvira, the aban-

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doned sweetheart. Catalinon, variously disguised as Arlequino, Sganarelle or Pasquariello, the fantastic clown, has now become the realistic Leporello, a human satire, the all-too-obedient servant, an unwilling accomplice and repentant coward. Masetto and Zerlina are the traditional secondary lovers, who in the 'high period of German literature represent a reminiscence of the pastoral play as against the serious tragedy.'

The course of action is briefly this: Don Juan has managed to enter the house of Donna Anna in the guise of her betrothed, Don Ottavio. Leporello keeps watch outside. Donna Anna discovers the deception, frees herself and calls for help. The Commander (her father), who answers, is killed by Don Juan. The latter, with Leporello, escapes, while Donna Anna collapses and is joined by Don Ottavio, who swears to visit vengeance upon the unknown criminal. In Scene II, Donna Elvira, abandoned by Don Juan, is seeking her faithless lover. Don Juan approaches to console her, but recognizing her, escapes, leaving Leporello to make his excuses for him. But the valet reveals Don Juan's real character by reciting his long register of love affairs. Another vow of vengeance. The third scene is that of the wedding of the peasant couple, Masetto and Zerlina, near Don Juan's country house. Don Juan endeavors to seduce the charming, ingenious Zerlina, and remove her jealous bridegroom. Donna Elvira appears, warns the girl and is declared insane by Don Juan. Don Ottavio and Donna Anna enter, and ask Don Juan to help them find the trail of the unknown murderer. Elvira accuses Don Juan of the crime and is again declared insane. Ottavio will not believe his friend's guilt, but upon Donna Anna's entreaties determines to watch him.

A brilliant festival has been arranged in Don Juan's villa for the peasant couple. After a rendezvous between the profligate and Zerlina has been spoiled by the watchful Masetto, Don Juan invites the entire company into his ball-room. Peasants mingle with gentle-folk. Elvira, Anna and Ottavio enter, masked, and are asked to participate in the gaiety. Don Juan manages in the confusion of the feast to lure Zerlina away, while Leporello engages Masetto's attention. Her cries for help from the adjoining room attract the vengeance seekers and the

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guests. Masetto forces the door, and Don Juan, sword in hand, drags Leporello out of the room, accusing him of the attempted seduction. He is believed by none, and threatened and cursed by the crowd. A thunderstorm rages without.

Untouched, Don Juan is out for fresh adventure in Act II. Leporello, in his master's guise, is forced to keep an appointment with Elvira, while Don Juan serenades her maid. Masetto and his friends appear to attack Don Juan, but are shrewdly misdirected by Leporello, who beats up Masetto in the bargain. But the latter, with Zerlina and Donna Anna, afterward finds the disguised Leporello with Donna Elvira, and the discovery of the disguise strengthens the suspicion against Don Juan. In the graveyard scene which follows, Don Juan, rejoined by Leporello, encounters the Commander's statue and is warned by the voice of the dead man's spirit. Don Juan, unafraid, bids Leporello invite the statue to supper, whose answer, 'Yes,' for a moment puzzles the evil-doer.

After a 'concession scene' for Donna Anna and Don Ottavio the gruesome scene of the supper follows. Elvira's appeal to Don Juan's conscience goes unheard; leaving, she encounters the entering statue and utters a cry. The statue repeats its admonitions, disappears, and the unrepentant sinner is swallowed up into hell. The other characters appear, to learn his fate from Leporello, and indulge in a long vocal utterance of the moral:

*Questo è il fin, di chi fa mal
Ed de' perfidi la morte, alla vita è sempre ugal.*

Don Giovanni marks an epoch—two epochs, as Bie points out, one literary, the other operatic. Any number of Don Juan versions have been written; before Mozart they were fantastic and burlesque, after Mozart, human and tragic. Earlier operas on the subject have been called 'The Stony Heart.' Da Ponte calls his libretto 'The Profligate Punished' (*Il dissoluto punito*—*il Don Giovanni*), and the figure of a demon-like Don Juan remains and fires the imagination of a Byron, Grabbe, Lenau, Hoffmann—and Shaw. Is it da Ponte who brought all this about? No, Da Ponte's book is ordinary enough—he approached it indifferently. But Mozart took it seriously. And in transforming his hero,

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he lifted his opera above its species. It is still a *buffa*, its *buffo* elements are all there, but they are submerged under a rising tide of human passions, of love and vengeance, of joy and death, and the triumph of fate. Mozart has called it a *dramma giocoso*. But we know only too well that he is in earnest. Not even the *buffa* conventions, the pretty airs, the coloratura nonsense, the impossible disguises, the harmonious ensembles (where the drama demands action), the platitudinous finale, will fool the audience into thinking that the ending is a happy one. We have seen the yawning of hell, heard the gruesome admonition of the ghost, heard Anna's pathetic lament, her noble cry of outraged virtue, her oath of vengeance. In that one supper scene Mozart has created a new species of art—shall we say the Romantic Opera (is it less so than *Freischütz*, with its Samiel and the magic bullets?) or the 'new comic' opera—taking *Meistersinger* as the ultimate development?

The *buffo* form is there, we said, but handled as freely as it could be—with the usual *secco recitative* to be sure (for which German producers often substitute the spoken word, in the manner of the *singspiel*), but the scenes are not determined by the position of the arias, the action runs on quite logically, the arias are free in form, sometimes interrupted; duets, trios, quartets, sextets are mixed together and sometimes defy classification, and the orchestra (now with trombones) is given a glorious part—a veritable sea on which the characters are calmly reflected, or tossed about in whirlpools of passion.

The figures again are finely drawn, every phrase betrays their quality, their character and their mental condition. Leporello is pure satire. From the moment that he reveals his knavish servant nature in staccato grumblings at the opening of the opera to his ludicrous display of fear in the graveyard scene and in the sup-

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per scene at the end he remains the buffoon. The 'register' aria, in which he reveals Juan's many loves, is a model of drollery and its second section a remarkable gallery of musical portraits; the aria '*Ah pietà, Signori mici,*' a piece of caricature which cannot fail of effect.

Don Juan, too, is a buffo character, full of dash and daring, ready of wit, bad to the core. But above all, he sings—sings in lilting accents. *Fin ch'an dal vino* charms in graceful turns of melody; *La ci darem la mano* (poor Zerlina!), *Oh vieni alla finestra*—who can resist him? Surely not the sentimental, simpering Elvira. She is the simply feminine, disappointed in love, ready to forgive upon the slightest pretext, and be betrayed once more. Her melodies are pretty, but without sweep, not sad, just melancholy. But Donna Anna's are grandiose in their sorrow, of noble beauty, of sweeping passion. It is she who brings about Juan's downfall; she is outraged virtue, divine womanhood, beauty of soul as well as of body. Her outcries against the traitor at the beginning, her duet with Don Ottavio, the sluggish lover; her magnificent 'Vengeance' aria, *Or sai chi l'onore* (Act I, Scene 13) and the lovely rondo-aria in the graveyard that has so much of Mozart in it, and, last but not least, her parts in the ensembles, the sextet of Act I especially, when her character is so nobly contrasted with the others—all these are tokens of her creator's deep affection for her. To her, as one commentator puts it, he 'gives the last that he has to give.'

In the finales of *Don Giovanni* Mozart again surpasses himself. In them the crucial action of the drama takes place. That of the first act consists of a series of short pieces divided into four general parts: first, the idyllic, mildly agitated introduction before the villa; second, the trio of vengeance, both seductively punctuated by the sounds of dance from within; third, the ball itself—a complication of dances—*Minuet*, *Follia* and *Ale-*

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manna (waltz), while flirtation and intrigue go on in conflicting rhythms, Don Juan in 2/4, Masetto in 3/8—a masterpiece of counterpoint, and a banquet of delicious tunes; fourth, the cry of Zerlina and the menacing crowd and the 'Vengeance' ensemble.

The last finale begins gaily, with Don Juan at supper, accompanied by charming tunes, quotations from Martin's *Cosà rara*, Sarti's *Fra i due litiganti* and his own *Figaro*. At this juncture he has Juan drink a toast to himself, the composer. Elvira's last appeal, Leporello's fright, usher in the Ghost, and then follows the terrific scene ending in Don Juan's destruction. This is tragedy! The reëntry of the other characters and their 'moral' chorus at the end is *buffo* again—it is unworthy and should be omitted—has been omitted frequently.

Don Giovanni's première was at Prague, not at *blasé* Vienna, which preferred Dittersdorf's and Martin's trifles to Mozart's *Figaro*. In Prague the fire of enthusiasm had not abated; *Figaro's* tunes were familiar in every tavern. Mozart was happy in his task. Sure of appreciation, bathing in the sunlight of public favor, he passed a healthful, joyful time and on Oct. 29th, 1787, had his efforts crowned by real success. Good-naturedly he had changed much to suit singers, and dashed off the overture during the night before the performance. It is of classic cast—sonata form—with an introduction presaging the Comtur scene, with a coda modulating away from the original key and ending on the dominant of F, leading—prelude-fashion—straight into Leporello's speech. At Vienna (in May, 1788), he again made concessions—a new scene and aria for Cavalieri, a new aria for Marcella—but the Viennese remained cold. 'More beautiful than *Figaro*,' conceded the emperor, but 'too much for Viennese teeth.' 'Give them time to chew,' said Mozart—but, alas, they had not finished when he died.

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VIII

The faint hopes for the future of the German *singspiel* which the production of *Entführung* might have inspired, were long dead. Italian opera again reigned supreme, *seria* and *buffa*, the latter now hedged about with convention no less than the former. Mozart was but one of a number of composers who supplied what demand there was, and the lack of enthusiasm over *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* in Vienna shows how little his genius was appreciated. His hopes for the post of court conductor were shattered by the death of Joseph II in 1790. An unsuccessful concert tour, family troubles, the illness of his wife and his own growing indisposition all helped to increase his misery. Yet the creative fire burned as brightly as ever; still he yearned to write a German opera that should throw off the shackles of conventionality.

This state of mind should be sufficient explanation for Mozart's acceptance of the crafty Schikaneder, who offered him a libretto which under the circumstances a third-rate composer would have refused. The lure of financial success which the author-singer-actor-manager no doubt dangled before his victim's eyes could hardly have persuaded him. Emanuel Schikaneder's career thus far was the poorest kind of guarantee. Itinerant fiddler, travelling actor, manager of a troupe, he was never very successful except with the rabble. A mounteback nature, liar, plagiarist, an amusing companion not to be trusted too far—his type is familiar. But Mozart and he had been friends in the days gone by—eleven years before, when Schikaneder was acting in Salzburg. Shakespeare, Schiller, Lessing, Gluck, popular patriotic pieces and mere Harlequin shows—all were grist to his mill. His German *singspiel* season in Vienna (1784-1785) had actually been

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patronized by the emperor. Now he was back in the capital, exhibiting his troupe in a little barn of a show-house just outside the fortifications, in the so-called *Freihaus auf der Wieden*.

Whenever there was a novelty craze, Schikaneder would take it up. Just now it was 'fairy-plays.' A certain Marinelli had had some success with them. Wieland's collection of oriental fairy tales, *Dschinnistan*, gave plenty of material. 'The Stone of Wisdom' was Schikaneder's first attempt. He adapted it as a play and got music for it from various composers—Mozart included. Wranitzky's *Oberon* followed. (We are getting close to Weber!) The 'Magic Flute' was Schikaneder's next move. Ludwig Gieseke had 'dramatized' the story. But Perinet's 'Caspar the Bassoonist, or, the Magic Zither,' covering the same ground, was just then produced (with music by Wenzel Müller), and, whether that was the reason or not, Schikaneder so radically changed the plot that he could with justice set his own name to it. And what fearful justice he dealt himself!—a more inane, nonsensical, illogical and ludicrous libretto was never seen. His audacity in asking a Mozart to set cheap burlesque for this new 'Punch and Judy' simply served to perpetuate his awful mediocrity.

The original version of the 'Magic Flute,' the fairy tale of 'Lulu,' was the simple story of the wicked conjurer who holds in captivity the fair daughter of the good fairy queen, and of the handsome young prince who, also by the help of magic, rescues the fairy princess and receives the usual reward. In Schikaneder's hybrid version the good queen becomes a vindictive female (Queen of the Night), the wicked conjurer is converted into the high priest of Isis and Osiris (Saras-tro), who, actuated by supreme wisdom, virtue and kindly purpose, removes the fair daughter (Pamina) from her mother's evil influence. Tamino, the prince

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who is sent by the queen to recover her daughter, is caught in the spell of wisdom and virtue, and being duly tested for faithfulness and courage is united to Pamina by Sarastro himself. No one cares about what becomes of the queen-mother. Thus far all the characters are of a serious nature. And so are the 'orator' and the priests who are introduced as secondary characters. The comic element is embodied in Papageno, the bird-catcher, an utterly incongruous and burlesque figure who serves as contrast to the heroic character of Tamino (and, incidentally, gave an opportunity for Schikaneder's own buffooneries). Papagena (at first an old woman) is his mate—furnishing the inevitable soubrette part—while the Three Ladies (attendants to the Queen of the Night) and the three boys (Genii), chosen to lead Tamino in his quest, are all thrown in for good measure and pretty melody.

Now all this, absurd as it is, has a significance. Whether this saves the piece from being merely farcical or makes it more so, depends on the point of view. Schikaneder was a Freemason; Mozart joined the brotherhood in 1785 and 'it is clear from his compositions that his connection with it exercised a very deep and lasting moral influence upon him.'* Freemasonry was, moreover, a topic of the day—perhaps like syndicalism to-day, only more so. The church had declared against it, it was persecuted in Vienna and elsewhere; in 1780 a great congress was held in Wilhelmsbad and the movement was at its height during Joseph II's reign (1780). The emperor's father had been a Mason, yet Maria Theresia, a devout Catholic, suppressed the order officially. The leading minds of the day were concerned with the question. All this was reflected in the second act of the opera which is said

* E. J. Dent: 'Mozart's Operas: a Critical Study.'—It should also be pointed out that Mozart later wrote a masonic cantata to Schikaneder's words, and had already set several of the many masonic songs to music.

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even to symbolize the events and persons aforementioned. That, however, does not concern us. In any case it may help us to realize that the whole of the second act (or more than half the opera) is simply one grand operatic version of a masonic initiation, in which the Queen of the Night, on the one hand, and Sarastro and his associates, on the other, are used to symbolize the darkness of ignorance and sin (note the gender) and the light of wisdom and virtue. Manliness is exalted as the greatest of qualities, and Femininity is handled in none too complimentary a fashion.

The first act introduces Tamino lost in a forest and attacked by a huge serpent, from whose fangs he is saved by the Three Ladies (attendants of the Queen of Night). While he himself is asleep, Papageno, the bird catcher, in talking to Tamino, takes the credit of the conquest upon himself and is promptly punished by having his lips closed with a padlock by the Three Ladies, who now introduce themselves to Tamino and show him the picture of the fair captive princess—Pamina. He falls in love with the image, sings an aria about it and, having revealed his sentiments, is sent upon his mission by the Queen of Night herself, appearing to him in a haze of blue stage light. He is given Papageno—promptly pardoned for the purpose—as companion, and a wonderful flute, which will make his wishes come true, as aid. Papageno, in his turn, gets a set of bells with similar virtues. Three boys, quite superfluously, are to show them the way.

Pamina, in another scene, is seen to be badly treated and made love to by turns, by Sarastro's black attendant, Monostatos. Papageno, sent ahead by Tamino, so frightens the Moor by his strange appearance (being himself frightened by the other's black face) that the Moor runs from the room and leaves Papageno to guide Pamina away to Tamino who meantime has reached the Temple of the Three Doors with their mystical inscriptions, and learned Sarastro's real nature. Before reaching him they are overtaken by Monostatos and the Slaves, but Papageno plays upon his wonderful bells and makes them dance off the stage against their will. Sarastro enters, pardons Pamina for her attempt at flight, punishes the Moor and, with the Orator and priest, conducts Tamino and his companion into the temple to undergo the trials of initiation. The following

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scenes picture these tests of character, the outstanding one of which is that of *Silence*: even though Pamina appears, Tamino is not to speak to her (Shades of Orpheus!). Tamino fulfills the test; while Papageno fails grotesquely, in spite of his pretty counterpart, Papagena, being held before him as prize. Still, in the end he gets his desires just the same—by the special grace of the gods—only he is not to tread the enlightened path of the initiates, which apparently worries him very little. Tamino and Pamina are finally united, in a grand tableau, with Sarastro and all the priests attending—not, however, till Pamina, in despair at Tamino's coldness, has attempted suicide (prevented by the Three Ladies), after the Queen of the Night has tried to persuade her to murder Sarastro. Papageno, too, in a burlesque scene, has attempted to hang himself for having Papagena snatched away from him. She is, however, duly returned later, so that all—save the Queen of Darkness—are happy in the end! *

Over this muddle Mozart has thrown a shower of the most delicious music—the finest fruit of his ripened genius. Unrestricted by *buffo* traditions, he gave his imagination free rein, and sad as his life was as he approached his premature end, his humor sparkles through this limpid stream of sound as nowhere else. And, though far from iconoclasm, he again (as in *Don Giovanni*) created a genus: the Romantic *singspiel*, which was to beget the whole progeny of which *Freischütz* is the eldest.

Mozart adhered to the *singspiel* practice, abandoning recitative for the spoken word—except in a few exalted dramatic moments, and then he uses it with a new expressive force, as in the finale to Act I, when Tamino, thrice repulsed by the mysterious voices, is addressed by the priest. The free noble pathos with which he asks, 'Oh endless night, when wilt thou vanish?' and the mysterious *sotto voce* of the answering

* The ultimate source of the action of Act II has recently been investigated. It is said to be derived from a translation of an Egyptian story, 'Sethos,' made by the Abbé Jean Terrasson (1670-1750). The connection of Freemasonry with the ancient Egyptian mysteries has frequently been the subject of masonic dissertations.

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chorus, 'Soon, Youth, or Never!' reaches down through the century to Wagner. The two finales of the opera are worth studying. They occupy over two-fifths of the entire opera, and their form is so varied, so completely ruled by the action that we can see foreshadowed the music drama, which in a sense seems but the extension of the Finale into an entire act. And, lest we forget, Mozart was no stranger to the *leit-motif* idea, though far from its didactic consciousness. Witness the hieratic trombone chords which upon their first appearance interrupt the fugue-like overture; witness Papageno's whistle, and many a characteristic rhythm or melodic figure attaching to a character.

But the most significant fact about *Zauberflöte* is its Germanism—not only of language, but of music. Nowhere else has Mozart revealed this nationalism so strongly, not only in its symphonic nature, but in its spirit. Not arias but *songs* are the chief ingredient of this opera and their folk-flavor is unmistakable. We taste it right at the start in Papageno's bird-catching song, and more strongly in the 'Maid or Woman' song of Act III; it resounds in the festive strains of the three genii, leading Tamino into the temple, and is echoed again in Pamina and Tamino's song as they brave the test of fire and water. Whether Mozart drew upon the actual store of folk-melody or simply a deeply-rooted consciousness of its genius, these 'folkish' melodies must account for the popular success of the work—the small bourgeois no doubt went home whistling many a favorite tune. Mozart himself was in love with it. 'If I only might hear my "Magic Flute" once more,' he sighed on his deathbed. Can we doubt that it was these simple melodies that beguiled him, their creator, rather than the few arias *à l'Italienne* which he wrote for the *bravura* appetite of his day?

But even these are of surpassing charm—Tamino sings rather an indifferent one to start with (the pic-

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ture aria) and is answered by the Queen of the Night—all abandoned to coloratura—in a magnificent *tour de force*; Sarastro has two, of stately majesty and profound feeling, '*O Isis und Osiris*' and '*In diesen heil'gen Hallen*,' and Pamina, the heroine, quite appropriately sings an aria in G minor ('*Ach ich fühl's er ist verschwunden*'), which Dr. Bie considers to have more feeling than any other piece of the opera. And so it goes. We might expatiate for hours upon almost every number: duets, trios—especially trios (of the Three Ladies, the three Genii, etc.), quartets, quintets, etc. Then there is the charming little buffo piece where Papageno tries his magic bells on the Moors that come to handcuff him and Pamina, and lo—they are set to dancing by the charming tingle (very childish, to be sure, but whole musical comedies have been constructed on that little idea!). In another he contemplates suicide and looks in vain for some one to stop him, till, again, his little bells conjure Papagena on the scene and the two delight in their silly little *Pa-pa-pa-pa-geno* duet. 'A world of music, the world as music—the magic land of sounds,' exclaims Bie. 'Thither have we travelled, a magnificent road, often the reverse of Schikaneder's, not into the temple where Tamino leads the daughter of wicked Night through love to light, and reaches the consciousness of humanity, but the other, far more beautiful and full of prospects, through which Mozart has led us—the world of *music*, of which the moral is this: turn your woe into song and your obstacles into ensembles!'

IX

In *Figaro*, and in *Don Giovanni*, Mozart while writing *opera buffa* is searching for inner meanings—in the first he delineates personages and in so doing ennobles

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his characters, in the second he exalts the moral purpose and projects human destiny with dramatic force. In his third *opera buffa*, *Così fan tutte*, his sole purpose is to please with charming melody. There is no inner meaning in the plot, da Ponte's mind is its ultimate source—it is *galant* eighteenth-century comedy, meaningless except as a diversion, purposeless except to prove the inconstancy of woman.

Ferrando is betrothed to Dorabella, Guglielmo to her sister, Fiordiligi. Dorabella is passionate, impulsive, Fiordiligi sentimental and faithful. Both are very much in love. Their respective cavaliers vaunt their exalted merits to Alfonso. Alfonso is a cynic—not a malicious one, but clear-sighted and devoid of sentimentality. To prove his assertion that *all* women are fickle he makes a wager that he can make the two ladies in question break their troth. It is agreed that Ferrando and Guglielmo themselves, in disguise, shall act as traducers. Following the alleged summons of the king, they leave for the wars after a most touching farewell. Their two sweethearts are disconsolate.

Disguised, the two reappear to sue for the two ladies' favor, and find a ready aide in the maid, Despina, a sort of feminine Leporello. Neither her help nor that of Alfonso, posing as the 'strangers' friend, is of avail, any more than the ruse of attempted suicide on the part of both and their resuscitation at the hands of the 'magnetic' doctor (a supposed disciple of old Dr. Messmer, friend of the youthful Mozart), impersonated by Despina. The close of the first act finds both ladies firm as adamant and the triumphant lovers magnanimously offering to 'discount' the bet. But the time is not up and Alfonso returns to the charge, again with Despina as accomplice. Throughout Act II, Ferrando and Guglielmo make false love to each other's (not their own!) fiancées. Dorabella, the flirt, yields to temptation—Ferrando is furious and returns to his task to win Fiordiligi with new vigor. She is troubled, she wavers—she yields. The game is up. Alfonso soothes the troubled spirits of his friends with worldly advice, stages their sudden return and shames the ladies into contrition. Double wedding—tableau.

Silly, you will say. Yes, Mozart thought so, too, no doubt—and yet he sprinkled it with some of the best

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music that was in him. It is his fine ironical sense which finds unbridled expression here—the real *buffo*-Mozart, in his most unalloyed formula. He was fulfilling an imperial order, the libretto was the emperor's choice—a most innocuous one. It is one of the most tawdry incidents in Mozart's life—'Entführung' and 'Figaro' had 'too many notes' for the imperial ear—*Don Giovanni* did not please better. Mozart was employed to furnish dances for royal feet—at 800 florins a year. But his loyalty was firm. Frederick the Great could not win him with his Prussian dollars. The emperor was grateful and ordered *Così fan tutte*. And Mozart was anxious to please, true to the emperor, but for once less true to himself. And that is partly the cause (not the libretto alone) for the work's lack of popularity. In aria after aria the characters are pouring out commonplace sentiments at great length and the music never ceases to be graceful and suave—sometimes truly beautiful, as in Ferrando's fine *andante cantabile*, but not frequently interesting. But in the ensembles Mozart rises to some of his finest moments. Seduced by the charm of human voices, he pours forth heavenly phrases in the farewell quintet. Guglielmo begins it, hesitatingly, then Ferrando and Alfonso, Fiordiligi and Donabella indulge in deliciously modulating thirds, the two groups intertwine, Ferrando sings counter melodies in graceful imitation—then all the five together in wonderful vocal sonority with the orchestra's playful arabesques about them. Such imitation, reiteration, rhythmic fuguing of the voices—but then, are they not expressing true emotions—the women at least? In Act II they lie—and so does Mozart. The trio which the two women sing with Alfonso in Act I is another inspired piece—fine independent melodies with undulating waves of thirds in the orchestra—it is the Mozart who wrote the three great symphonies of the preceding year—and he shows

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again in the finales, the flirtatious one of Act I with Despina's seductive little waltz, and the noble one at the end where the two couples unite in a *larghetto* 'of such splendor and beauty that one should delete the thought which they utter.' Once more is music triumphant over reason!

* * *

Thus is Mozart's contribution to opera. There is nothing to be said in conclusion—the works speak for themselves more eloquently than any eulogy could. He represents the triumph of purely musical genius in the dramatic field. He demonstrates the power of music to represent by sheer beauty and intangible character what words and actions try to interpret, and often fail. He, the most ingenuous, unphilosophical and un-didactic of musical dramatists, has left upon the course of musico-dramatic development an impression which the most didactic of theorists could not ignore, and when theories have proven false, as all artistic theories do eventually, the beacon light of pure art that Mozart set into the heavens will shine as brilliantly as ever.

CHAPTER IV

THE CLASSICAL SERIO-COMIC OPERA IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

The post-revolutionary period and its trend—Luigi Cherubini—Méhul and others—The German opera: Weigl and Winter; Schubert's operas—Beethoven and the opera—*Fidelio*.

I

WE are moving between epochs. In France the high tide of the Gluck period has rolled back and is waiting to return with greater roar—in the shape of the 'grand historical' opera of the nineteenth century. In Germany the *singspiel* has exhausted its youthful strength in bringing forth a Mozart, and is preparing to draw fresh nurture from the Romantic Movement. For neither the time is ripe as yet. Meantime composers come and go, some great, some otherwise, and use what mediums there are at hand: *buffa* and *seria* in Italy, as before, *singspiel* in Germany, *opéra comique* in France. None ventured to advance the species or fuse their qualities into a new one. Mozart, when he composed Italian opera, wrote *secco* recitative; when he composed German opera, he used dialogue. His successors did the same.

In France the official Opéra (Académie de Musique) was more orthodox than ever. It was next to impossible to climb upon the pedestal with the last great idol, Gluck. So composers took refuge in the Comique, whether they wanted to or not, and there they gave vent even to their serious impulses. Thus 'comic' operas often were comic only in name, but they employed

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dialogue instead of recitative, for the Opéra still monopolized stage performances with continuous music. In this technical feature, therefore, a certain similarity grew up between the two national schools, French and German, and the French *opéra comique* has often been called the 'French *singspiel*.'

But there was more than that superficial similarity. Napoleon internationalized Europe. In 1810 most of Germany was French. The post-revolutionary spirit spread to the boundaries of Russia. Nationalism in art received its last great check. During this artistic race confusion Cherubini, an Italian, writes German music for the delight of a Paris audience. (His *Anacréon* was actually hissed as German music in 1803); Beethoven, in Vienna, listens to Cherubini and Méhul in rapt attention and writes his *Fidelio* on a French subject. But the subjects are much the same, German or French. The doctrines of Jean-Jacques had awakened the consciousness of class, the sense of mutual responsibility, communal sympathy, the revolution had wrung hearts as they had never been wrung before and left them soft as butter. Now tears were as fashionable as they had been reprehensible in the *ancien régime*. Loyalty, self-sacrifice, the tragedies of common existence, touching incidents of everyday life, sufficed to move strong hearts to pity.* It was the reign of the *comédie larmoyante*, a warm, soft soil for perfervid romance to nourish itself upon.

It must be admitted that the similarity between these works ends here. They do not present a continuous movement, like the *opera buffa* or the German Romantic opera. But nevertheless they are nurtured in the same musical soil, for the spirit of German classicism was spreading from its Viennese centre to the

* Rockstro points out that Cherubini's four principal operas and Beethoven's *Fidelio* are built on the same motive—the rescue of an unjustly imprisoned person, effected through the devotion of a loved friend in a spirit of self-sacrifice.

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four corners of Europe. Instrumental music, except in Italy, was on the rise everywhere; the symphony was almost taking the place of the opera as a leading attraction. Hence the composers of this period are either so filled with this classic consciousness that their operas fail utterly in a dramatic sense—witness Haydn and Schubert—or the spirit of the symphony beguiles them into bestowing an almost undue emphasis and care upon their symphonic sections. None of them are essentially dramatic natures. Cherubini's operas have overtures at the beginning of each act, Beethoven writes three overtures for his one opera and attempts to let one of them tell the story of his whole drama—even Méhul's overture to *Le Jeune Henri* far outlived the opera itself.

The upshot of all of which is that there are no really great works to be recorded in this chapter, save one. That one is great, not in a dramatic sense (for in all its chastity it is as absurd as some of the most flagrant Italian operas) but as a musical work of extraordinary inherent dramatic power. This chapter might indeed be entitled *Fidelio*, for that is the one mountain peak in the scattered range. The others cluster about it chiefly in a sense of period—they have little in common with it beyond externals. Its composer is of all the one who raises his head above the clouds and communes with God.

II

Outwardly the lives of these composers emphasize their essentially musical tendencies. Cherubini, Méhul, Berton, Kreutzer, Catel, Lesueur, are all connected with the Paris Conservatoire in its earliest period. Closely associated with them are the masters of the *opéra comique* in its lighter phase: Boieldieu, Isouard, Auber, etc., whose work will be reviewed in a later

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chapter. Luigi Cherubini (1760-1844) is the most important of the group. Cherubini was an Italian and reared in the operatic traditions of Naples. When he arrived in Paris, in 1788, he had numerous Italian successes behind them. The difference in principles represented by Gluck and Piccini undoubtedly made him think, and, serious as he was, he decided in favor of the former. But, being probably a more learned musician than either, he did not stop at a mere imitation of Gluck's facture: He deepened and intensified his expression so that it struck both Gluckists and Piccinists as something new. His was a remarkably sensitive artistic nature. As definitely absolute as Beethoven, he lacks the strength of that musical Titan, but instead of it has a certain fineness and tenderness which, less compatible with the austere ruggedness of the classicism of his period, has rendered his work more perishable than that of his contemporaries. Beethoven himself admired him most keenly, and connoisseurs will always relish his refined beauty. But, generally speaking, he is dead to-day, because, as Bie says, 'he only half lived.'

His *Demophoön*, produced at the Opera in 1788, was a failure. The Théâtre Feydeau, founded shortly before by Marie Antoinette's friseur (*cf.* Vol. II, p. 42), gave him a better welcome. For some time he was its conductor. There *Lodoïska* (1791) established his reputation. It was followed by *Elisa* (1794), *Médée* (1797), *L'hôtellerie portugaise* (1798), *La punition* (1799), *Emma* (1799), *Les deux journées* (1800), *Épicure* (1800), and *Anacréon* (1803). All these employ spoken dialogue in place of recitative, for the official opera alone could, as we have said, produce opera with continuous music. Technically they are, therefore, *opéras comiques*. But in content they are, for the most part, serious, and this technical detail has long remained as the only distinction between the two genres.

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Médée, probably Cherubini's finest work musically, is remarkable for dignity of thought and grandeur of expression. Kretzschmar * says that 'had it achieved greater significance, Weber and Wagner might have saved themselves many a trouble.' Especially notable are the arias of *Médée* and of *Neris*, full of passion and rhythmic life, *Médée*'s powerful duets with *Jason*, and the three overtures. That to the third act has been called 'a symphony hitherto unheard of in the world of opera, lying in a zone between Beethoven and Wagner.'

Les deux journées, which is still performed, is remarkable as a forerunner of *Fidelio*, as well as for its numerous intrinsic excellences. Its story is that of a prisoner, Count Armand, detained in Paris for defying Cardinal Mazarin. The gates of the city are closely guarded, but a water-carrier, Michèle, whose son has been previously befriended by Armand, helps him to escape in his empty water-cart. He is, however, recaptured in a nearby village, while protecting his wife, Constance, from the insults of two soldiers. In the crisis a messenger arrives, bearing a pardon from the queen.

Fidelio is foreshadowed not only in the text of the piece. It is, even musically, its immediate precursor. Beethoven considered Cherubini the greatest living dramatic composer and referred to his operas as great works of art. Indeed, musically, this one is replete with individual beauties. Its originality and musicianly finesse, its solidly constructed ensembles, its colored and picturesque orchestration are still admired by musicians, and may still be listened to with pleasure. The two opening songs, the ballad of the Savoyard and the songs of Michèle are of a chaste melancholy that is more Germanic than Latin. Both melodies are used as leading motives in the rest of the opera, the

* Peters Jahrbuch, No. 13.

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second especially in the *melodrame scene*—a leaf out of the book of Master Benda (see p. 82 f). The effectiveness of this form of scene, which became a staple of these '*opéras larmoyants*,' cannot be denied. (We shall meet it again in *Fidelio*.) In the first act there are also a trio and a final sextet that may well be called typically Cherubini masterpieces; clear disposition, beautiful harmonic turns, fine lyric bursts distinguish them. In the second act there is a soldiers' chorus of abstract musical beauty, almost ecclesiastical in style; a trio, and a finale of fine construction and phraseology. The third act begins with a lovely pastoral ballet. The final scene brings the one passionate exaltation of the opera. It is the discovery of the fugitive Armand—the only really dramatic passage. All in all, it is a fine *musical* work, like its great successor. Its beauties are musical, they show the hand of an exquisite artist; but they have not the abandon of genius, whose momentum surmounts every handicap, even that of an undramatic text. The librettist of *Les deux journées* was, by the way, Jean-Nicola Bouilly, the author of the French original of *Fidelio*.

Cherubini's career is in some respects the reverse of Gluck's. Gluck developed in Vienna and accomplished his greatest work in Paris. Cherubini developed in Paris and rounded out his (operatic) work in Vienna. Napoleon was his evil genius. He ran amuck of him in Paris and sought refuge in the Austrian capital, where he was received with open arms. But Bonaparte got there too, and Cherubini was driven from pillar to post.

In Vienna, after reviving *Lodoiska*, he wrote a German opera, *Faniska* (1806), and produced it at the Kärntnerthor theatre. For this opera, too, he had written, not one, but three overtures, one for each act, and each contrasted with the others. *Faniska* is the most original of Cherubini's works; full of unexpected turns

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—it has been called bizarre. He tries to be German and, in a measure, succeeds. His melody is not the flowing Italian cantilena—it is compact, neatly phrased and has germinal motives that are used reminiscently. His instruments are articulate, his orchestra interposes significant figures, accompanies in unison, indulges in unusual suspensions, enharmonic effects and other purely musical delights. His ensembles are downright learned at times: quietly flowing canons, quartets of Beethovenish nobility—even his most brilliant passages are chaste and of a strong classic line. It is no wonder that Cherubini ended by writing for the church. After returning to Paris he had tried to regain the favor of the emperor with *Pygmalion* and then renounced the stage for some time. Several unsuccessful stage attempts followed later, of which only the last, *Ali Baba* (1833), is worthy of mention.

III

Méhul (1763-1817) comes more near to being a direct Gluck disciple than Cherubini. Gluck quickly recognized his talent when the young musician was introduced to him in Paris, and advised him to write for the stage. But, though Méhul grasped the older master's principles thoroughly, he was not a slavish imitator of him. He wrote a grand opera, *Alonzo et Cora*, but had to wait six years for its performance at the Opéra (1790), which was followed by that of *Stratonice* in the following year. But meantime (1790) the Opéra Comique had produced his *Euphrosine et Corradin* and altogether seems to have been more hospitable to him. After a number of minor successes there came *Le jeune Henri*, which was hissed off the stage for representing a king in the fifth year of the republic. But the overture had to be played three times over. Of his numer-

MEHUL AND OTHERS

ous later operas, comic and serio-comic, *Une folie* (1803), *Les deux aveugles de Tolède* (1806), *Uthal* (1806) and *Joseph* (1807) are the most notable. The last-named is still performed in France and Germany, and, in oratorio form, in England.

Like the rest of the composers of this group, Méhul is not overly dramatic. He was born into a symphonic age, and for the rest depended on tradition. Unfortunate in the choice of his librettos, he tried to atone for them with his expressive melody and fine musicianship generally. But, as we have said, only one man has completely succeeded in doing that.

Une Folie is a story of disguise. Its libretto is by Bouilly. It has graceful and well-made ensembles of genuine French cast. *Les deux aveugles de Tolède* Bie calls a mixture of these French ensembles and of Italian buffo remains. *Uthal* is founded on an Ossianic legend. But *Joseph* surpasses all these works. Julien Tiersot considered it superior as an oratorio to Handel's 'Israel in Egypt,' in dignity as well as in sonority. Its plot follows the Scripture text closely and, in Streatfeild's words, 'it seems to have caught the largeness and simplicity of the Old Testament with rare art.' The dramatic climax—the recognition of Joseph by his father and brothers—seems, however, not to have been recognized by the composer, for he has left it in dialogue. Recently the dialogue sections have been converted into recitative by Max Zenger, but that has not sufficed to save the work from appearing old-fashioned. There are passages, though, like the opening aria, '*Champs éternels*,' the romanza of Benjamin, Joseph's '*Si vous pouvez repentir*' and Jacob's tender '*Seul appui de ma vieillesse*,' that still have the force of life. Some things in it are worthy of Gluck. The orchestration is vivid and characteristic, the workmanship fine and the melody impressive, but as an opera the work hardly counts in these days.

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The rest of our group is quickly disposed of. There is Henri Montan Berton (1767-1844), harmony professor at the Conservatoire and a successful opera writer in his day, with *Montano et Stephanie* (1799), *Le délire* (1799), *Aline* (1803) and many others; Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831), the famous violinist, with forty operas from *Jeanne d'Arc à Orleans* to *Mathilde* (refused by the Opéra); Jean François Lesueur (1760-1837), the 'forerunner of Berlioz in program music,' whose *Les Bardes* has much to recommend it. It is 'declamatory rather than lyrical, decorative rather than realistic, but in the midst of its conventions and formality there is much that is true as well as picturesque.' * *Les Bardes* was submitted to the Opéra, but Catel's *Semiramis* was chosen in preference to it. This started a feud that ended only with the dismissal of Lesueur from the Conservatoire. But Catel, though the overture to *Semiramis* was praised by Weber, is more important as a harmonic theorist than a composer.

No native composer of this generation was to achieve a really lasting distinction. The best of the rising generation turned its attention to really comic opera and scored its greatest successes in this most distinctively national form. The more pretentious development of the grand opera found its leader (as it had done before) in the person of a foreigner. None of the native talents for some time could withstand the rising tide of Spontini's vogue, ephemeral as it was. (Cf. Chap. VI.)

IV

We now turn to Germany. In music—abstract music—it is by this time supreme, and its supremacy is beginning to be recognized. But in opera, in spite of the heroic blows struck by Gluck (who in the minds of

* R. A. Streatfeild: *op. cit.*

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most people was considered as having turned French), and Mozart (who was certainly more Italian than German in opera), Germany was still governed from Italy. Men like Salieri at Vienna, Paër at Dresden, held easy sway, while some Germans, like the Bavarian Simon Mayr, actually turned Italian. We have followed the modest beginnings of the *singspiel* in the last chapter and have seen it degenerate into an operetta almost at the start. Mozart alone maintained a really high level in this field.

Now among Mozart's contemporaries there was none that had a dramatic instinct like his. Haydn willingly yielded the field to him; his own operas were written for private consumption—Prince Esterhazy had them performed in his residence. An *Orfeo ed Euridice* was written for London but never performed.*

After Haydn and Mozart two names must be noted—those of Joseph Weigl (1766-1846), the composer of the popular *Schweizerfamilie*, and Peter von Winter (1754-1825), the writer of the sequel to Mozart's 'Magic Flute,' entitled *Das Labyrinth*. Weigl wrote a German opera at sixteen, which was not performed, and an Italian one at twenty-three, which *was*. About thirty more followed, and finally, after Salieri's death, he became second court kapellmeister and rested content to write no more.

Die Schweizerfamilie is a typical product of its period—idyllic, sentimental, touching. In its day it provoked tears, to-day—smiles. A Swiss family has been transplanted to Germany by the lord of the manor, out of gratitude for the saving of his life. He has even rigged up artificial scenery on the model of their home village. But he has forgotten to bring along the lover of the young Emmeline, who, however, comes of his

* Rockstro says it is remarkable rather for supreme refinement than for dramatic power—as might be expected. No other contemporaries are even worth mentioning.

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own accord, and is at first kept away from his love. Finally she approaches his cottage, a chalumeau is heard, she takes up its melody, then he. Then, after they discover each other, they both sing it together. Father arrives and sings it too, and everybody is happy.

Long drawn out as its thin material is, this opera depends wholly upon its undoubted musical charm to sustain the interest. Its historical importance lies indeed in the fact, that—perhaps for the first time in opera—it relies upon the music to say what the text leaves unsaid and to conclude what has been left undone. *Das Waisenhaus*, built on similar lines, is the only other opera of Weigl to achieve anything like the popularity of its mate.

Peter von Winter was a Mannheimer. He was a violinist in the famous orchestra of Karl Theodor, was transferred with the court to Munich and there became court conductor in 1788. He wrote Italian operas as well as *singspiele*—a great many of both kinds. Besides the 'Magic Flute' sequel, *Die Pyramiden von Babylon*, and *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* (1796) are the best remembered ones.

The great poet Goethe, always enthusiastic about the *singspiel*, had begun to write a continuation of the *Zauberflöte*—on ethical, philosophical and highly poetic lines. Winter does it quite differently. A labyrinth, through which the initiates must pass, a Papageno family, various devils, a great war of the parties of good and evil, ending in a single combat of Tamino and Typhoeus, the night-bridegroom of Pamina, and the triumph of Sarastro's philosophy. The music of this Mozart sequel is not Mozartian in the least, but rather in the style of the Paris Opera, with the whole apparatus of grand opera thrown in. High dramatic outbursts, double choirs and much stately pomp are in the score, which, all in all, is of rather good musical quality. Mozart's trombone motive of the mystic rites,

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the pipe tune of Papageno, are cleverly used as *leit-motifs*. Papageno is set up to new tricks, and the Three Ladies as well as Sarastro are used for new effects. Winter has been said to be the link between the *singspiel* fairy opera and the coming historical music drama; his *Unterbrochene Opferfest* (1796) actually prepared the way for Meyerbeer *et al.*

These are the crumbs of art history. They fill a space, but they fit neither here nor there. They must be recorded because they are signs of the times.

It would be unjust not at least to mention Schubert in this review. Poor Schubert! he was not very successful with anything in his life, but least of all with opera. His songs are his glory; a great symphonist he would undoubtedly have been had he lived long enough, but a musical dramatist never. Yet he wrote stage works of every description: singspiele (*Des Teufels Lustschloss*, *Der vierjährige Posten*, *Fernando*, *Die Freunde von Salamanca*, etc.); a grand opera (*Alfonso und Estrella*); operettas (*Der häusliche Krieg*, etc.); a musical farce (*Die Zwillingsbrüder*); and a melodrama (*Die Zauberharfe*). Several of them, like *Die Bürgschaft*, have remained fragments; others, like *Die Minnesänger*, were lost. Then there is the famous music for *Rosamunde* (by the unfortunate Helmine von Chezy who afterward furnished Weber with the impossible *Euryanthe* libretto).

Most of these operas were of course doomed in advance by their own librettos. Schubert had no sort of dramatic sense or judgment. *Die Zwillingsbrüder* and *Die Zauberharfe* were performed in 1820, *Rosamunde* in 1823, *Alfonso und Estrella* (written 1821-22) was not performed till Liszt resurrected it at Weimar in 1854, *Der häusliche Krieg* not till 1861, and *Fierrabras* not till 1863, in Vienna. None of them may be said to have maintained themselves in the operatic repertoire, though much of the music continues to live.

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Ever since Schubert's death various attempts at resurrecting his operas have been made; and these have perhaps been most successful in the case of *Der häusliche Krieg*. It stages a strike of women against the men, who organize a counter-strike, and it all ends happily in reconciliation. Its characters are figures that sing Schubert songs, as lyrical as all the rest of them. A duet of the loving servant-pair opens the 'opera.' There are several others that have been rescued into a volume of Schubert duets; there are ensembles, of women, of men, of both. Many charming Schubertian turns are here, buried, like many other glowing gems of this genius, in impossible settings. But who knows?—here is a lyricism that had never before appeared in opera; the German *Lied* with all its fresh vigor and spontaneity, that may have left its mark upon the genre. Bie hints at Smetana's 'Bartered Bride' in this connection. Perhaps—perhaps Schubert, the opera composer, has not lived in vain.

V

With Beethoven we reach the business of the day. With his one opera he is able to claim the major part of our chapter. Of all these undramatic souls he is the least dramatic—and the greatest. He is of the great 'absolute' line of musicians that stretches from Bach to Brahms. And yet there was more emotion in his being than in most men that ever lived. His nature was positively volcanic. But he lived his drama and needed no stage. His muse was epic. The theatre must have repelled him, one would think. How he ever came to write an opera seems a miracle. In Vienna, where he lived, Italians—and some Germans—were feverishly turning out one after another. His sympathies were with his countrymen in their struggle

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for recognition. He was glad over the success of a *Don Giovanni* performance, considered a slap to Paësiello. He admired Mozart of course; at the Theater an der Wieden, where the 'Magic Flute' was being played, he stood spellbound close to the orchestra. But the subjects of most of the operas he disliked. He said he did not see how a man could set such a subject as *Figaro* or *Don Giovanni* to music. His brusquely moral nature longed for 'loftier' themes. The *comédie larmoyante* of France was more sympathetic to him.

Projects of a 'Macbeth,' a 'Melusine' and what not had been gone through in his mind. He was bound to write an opera—perhaps for mercenary reasons. He said that opera in Vienna was too badly paid—and yet he made application for a contract to write one a year. The very idea seems absurd. It was rejected. Cherubini and Méhul he listened to intently. To the former he wrote that the appearance of a new work by him was of greater interest to him than his own. Quite natural, therefore, that the librettist of *Les deux Journées* should become his librettist too. At length he received the commission to set the *Léonore* text (in Sonnleitner's translation)—at the same time that Cherubini was given *Faniska*. The year 1805 was occupied with its composition.

Léonore ou l'amour conjugal, originally written by Bouilly for an opera by Gaveaux performed at the Théâtre Feydeau in 1798, was based partially upon his personal experiences as governor of Tours. But Bouilly was cautious enough to remove the scene to Spain. An Italian version, corrupted with the usual operatic inanities, was composed by Paër and given in Vienna in 1809, after two versions of Beethoven's *Fidelio* had gone across the boards. Beethoven was drawn to the subject because of its nobly human and moral qualities and Joseph Sonnleitner was entrusted with the German adaptation, first in three acts, later

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in two. The plot remained practically the same in the various versions.

Florestan, a Spanish noble, and a courageous lover of truth, has incurred the enmity of the corrupt Don Pizarro, governor of a state's prison near Seville. There Florestan, captured by his enemy, is confined in a dismal dungeon and kept near starvation while Pizarro gives out that he is dead. Leonore, the unhappy prisoner's faithful wife, has disguised herself in male attire and induced Rocco, the jailer, to hire her as attendant under the pseudonym of Fidelio. She wins everyone's favor and, alas, the love of Rocco's daughter, who promptly forsakes Jacquino, the doorkeeper, for the handsome 'youth.' Leonore has to feign reciprocal affection and Rocco decides to unite the two young people in marriage.

Pizarro appears with soldiers (march and chorus); he hears that Don Fernando, the minister of state, is about to visit the prison and inspect it, having heard of Pizarro's injustice and cruelty toward a number of prisoners. His only course to avoid detection of his crime against Florestan is to put him out of the way. Rocco is not to be induced to commit murder; Pizarro decides to do the deed and orders the jailer to dig a grave in Florestan's dungeon. Leonore's opportunity to see her husband has arrived, for she is to assist Rocco in his sad task. She has overheard Pizarro's plan and in a passionate recitative and aria gives vent to her soul's torture, and her hope to save Florestan. A chorus of prisoners, allowed on Leonore's pleading to come out of their cells for a respite, closes the act.

Act II, Florestan is seen in his confinement and reveals his suffering in the beautiful A-flat aria which is used as a theme in the three 'Leonore' overtures. A melodrama* (duodrama) between Rocco and Fidelio accompanies the digging of the grave, followed by a brief warning and hope-inspiring conversation between Florestan and his wife—unrecognized—while Rocco goes to open the dungeon for Pizarro. In a quartet between the four characters Pizarro attempts his dastardly deed, foiled by Leonore with a pistol. She reveals her identity and, as a trumpet call announces the arrival of the minister, Pizarro is forced to hurry away to meet his visitor. A duet by the lovers, followed, after a climax, by a few spoken

* Spoken dialogue with orchestral accompaniment, as first introduced by Benda (see p. 82 f.).

'Fidelio'

Mural painting by Moritz von Schwind in the Imperial Opera House, Vienna



'FIDELIO'

words of Florestan: 'What hast thou done for me?' and Leonore's answer: 'Nothing, nothing, my Florestan,' effectively closes a scene of extraordinary pathos. The finale, a spectacular scene before the castle, with chorus, brings Pizarro's disgrace and the happiness of all the lovers.

Fidelio's position in the history of German opera is unique. It cannot be definitely classed with any existing *genre* and yet it introduces no essentially new principles. In form it is a *singspiel*—with spoken dialogue to carry the dramatic thread between the musical numbers. But it is a sublimation of that form rather than a representative of it; the comic element being wholly submerged (just as *Don Giovanni* is the sublimation of *opera buffa*, with the comic element nearly subordinated). In content and treatment it is a near relative to the sentimentally serious products of the French comic opera school of Cherubini and Méhul, of which *Les deux journées* is the representative example. Beethoven's admiration for Cherubini's work is a matter of history, and *Fidelio* shows the influence plainly. The 'Magic Flute' is a first cousin too; indeed, Beethoven considered it a model of form.

But whatever *Fidelio* pretends to be, it is not an opera in the ordinary sense. It is a monumental anomaly, a magnificent paradox. It defies the very elements of realism and logic, and yet it achieves a measure of dramatic truth. Within the very bonds of convention it struggles for freedom of expression; it goes to the bounds of the ludicrous in its theatrical absurdities and still compels our earnest attention, our admiration of its sublime conception. In brief, it demonstrates the power of music to overcome every other shortcoming. Beethoven, as we have said, was essentially undramatic, or better, untheatrical, in his make-up. Sincerity was the keynote of his character; no mask, no pose, no sham was possible to him. His music is an expression of human emotion and human ex-

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perience, such as none achieved before him; his *Eroica* is a dramatization of life, his Ninth Symphony an apotheosis of humanity; a dramatic musician he was, not a musical dramatist. Words are nothing to him. He feels a situation, a character, a soul-crisis, conceives it broadly and interprets it in strangely colored chords, rapturous motives, in soul-stirring tremolos, ethereal wood-wind chords, mysterious notes of the horn. Thus Florestan's aria becomes a mood picture of resigned sorrow, Leonore's a pæan of hope, their duet a rhapsody of joy and love—all abstract things with a universally personal significance. 'One should not have given Beethoven any text, except the words "hope," "consolation," "man," "brothers," "liberty," "nameless joy"—there, as if by magic, he is always in presence.' Still there are truly dramatic moments in the work, thanks to the orchestra—marvellous in its power of nuance—that Beethoven brought into the opera. For the orchestra carries the atmosphere, paints the mood, delineates the action and reveals the persons' thoughts—what need, then, of words? Orchestral language, the most articulate speech known, takes their place. The voices themselves become instruments—witness the famous quartet in Act I, when the four characters sing a canon; the same melody does for all, diverse as are their interests and sentiments. But the instruments assist them, clarinets for Marzelline, flutes for Leonore, horns for Rocco, and bassoon for Jacquino. Again in the trio—soon after—Marzelline sings of her love for Fidelio, and Leonore of hers for Florestan to the same melody, but orchestral motives reveal Leonore's courage. And in the duet between Pizarro and Rocco the orchestra paints emotions in wonderfully effective rhythms and colors: '*jetzt, Alter, jetzt hat es Eile.*' At the beginning of this the music is punctuated with hesitating staccato octaves for strings and horn; in the middle, when Rocco refers to Florestan in his cell, with

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the words 'who barely lives'—there are wonderful broken triads in the strings over low sustaining chords for bassoon and horns, first C major, then E minor, second inversion, then diminished sevenths over B-flat—and so forth.

This duet is one of the two really dramatic pieces of the opera. The other is the scene in the dungeon, when Pizarro attempts his foul murder. The Leonore aria mentioned above and the Florestan A-flat adagio (beginning of Act II) are perhaps the noblest solo numbers. Pizarro is a regulation villain after the Italian manner—his 'raving' aria does not interest us, but for the fact that Beethoven supports it with a murmuring chorus (the watch commenting upon his remarks) which adds a new romantic touch.

Let us dwell for a moment upon the chorus. Beethoven uses it—not as dramatic protagonist—but rather in the manner of the oratorio. The prisoners are led forth to breathe the air and see the sunshine; a broad chant of gratitude arises which develops into a hymn to liberty. At the end of the opera the chorus breaks forth into a praise of womanhood, '*Wer ein holdes Weib errungen*'—broad cosmic strains of 'Ode to Joy' calibre. This is the lyricism of the German classic era—the age of Goethe and his 'Eternal Feminine.'

Absolute music raised to dramatic pitch, all this, but not opera, much less music drama. Mozart's dramatic genius is brought home to us most powerfully when we compare *Don Giovanni* to *Fidelio*. Mozart, with his keen interest for the stage and talent for characterization, fitted his persons and situations into perfect symphonic forms without doing violence to either. Beethoven, on the other hand, repeatedly arrests the program of his musical ideas for the sake of a dramatic significance. This very fact, however, tended in the direction of freedom of form and represents, in a sense, an advance.

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All in all, *Fidelio* must be considered the suggestive experiment of a musical genius, which could not but produce important consequences. Weber and Wagner are to find in this undramatic predecessor finger-posts of prodigious significance. As pure music its value is unassailable. Beethoven himself valued the work highly and Schindler attests that he spoke of it as 'the spiritual child which of all had given him the greatest birth pains as well as caused him the greatest chagrin and that therefore he loved it best.' This remark has reference to the great difficulties that *Fidelio* caused from its first and utterly unsuccessful performance Nov. 20, 1805. Vienna, during the Napoleonic occupation, was in no mood to give it serious attention; three performances finished it—the score was not printed. It has recently been gathered together in its original form (a work of twenty-five years) and published for the sake of comparison with the later versions. Much was changed, Beethoven yielded to the importunities of his friends, and on May 29, 1806, a new version appeared. Some improvements, some unhappy cuts, some concessions to singers musically still more disastrous. And all that for two performances—the management took it off in spite of seeming popular approval. In 1814 Treitschke reworked the text in two acts, Beethoven re-wrote half the music (its present form), substituted the overture in E ('*Fidelio*') and got twenty-two hearings.

Four overtures were composed for the work, and their significance goes far beyond the realm of opera, for they became the models for the so-called concert overtures of the Romantic period. The first three are called 'Leonore,' Beethoven's original name for the opera—the Viennese management changed it to avoid confusion with Paër's. The Leonore number 1 is a symphonic piece with little dramatic significance. The motive of Florestan's adagio aria forms the only bond

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to the opera. The second opens a new vista. Besides the Florestan motive (used as introduction, later as second theme) there arises the famous principal theme in C major—developed in wonderful Beethoven manner, brought to a climax in minor and interrupted by the trumpet call in E-flat which signalizes the crisis of the drama. Here, then, is the broad dramatic meaning in symphonic form, hope, struggle and deliverance. The whole of the opera in one symphonic movement. The true Beethoven in his own element. In the Leonore number 3 this scheme is developed to far greater perfection and with essentially the same materials. This magnificent work represents the pinnacle of Beethoven's dramatic symphonic power. With it, in Dr. Bie's words, he had swallowed up the whole opera. With only three 'characters'—Florestan, the trumpet, and the C major motive—he got more atmosphere than all the stage could give him. And as though he realized it, he substituted for it (for operatic purposes) the 'Fidelio' overture, an unpretentious, idyllic piece, devoid of all thematic significance. But since Gustav Mahler, in a memorable production of the opera, interpolated the Leonore number 3 between the dungeon scene and the finale, the practice has been followed elsewhere with remarkably thrilling effect.

CHAPTER V

THE ITALIANS BETWEEN MOZART AND VERDI

Italian contemporaries of Mozart; Cimarosa: *Matrimonio segreto*—The 'international' Italians; the German influence; comparisons; the Italian decadence—Rossini's Italian period: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; his tragic operas—Donizetti and Bellini; *Lucrezia Borgia*; *Lucia*; *La Favorita*; *Linda di Chamounix*—*Don Pasquale*; *L'Elisir d'amore*; *La fille du regiment*—*La Sonnambula*; *Norma*; *I Puritani*.

I

IN the Roman Pantheon three busts stand near each other: Sacchini, Paësiello, Cimarosa—memories of past brilliance. Only the last of these names is seen to-day outside of musical histories, and that one is remembered by virtue of a single work, *Il Matrimonio segreto*. But in their day these names were symbols of power. The career of Antonio Sacchini, born in 1734 in Naples, the son of a poor fisherman, was a triumphal passage through Rome, Venice (where he completed his fiftieth opera), Munich, Stuttgart and London to Paris (where he died in 1786). *Alessandro nell' Indie* (1786), *Il gran Cid*, *Tamerlano*, *Lucio Vero*, *Nitetti* and *Perseo* are the names of some of his Italian triumphs; *Dardanus* and *Œdipe Colone* (1786), those of two of his great French operas that came near rivalling those of Gluck. His music was melodious like that of all the Italians, but solid too, like that of the German classics. But to-day it is no more.

Giovanni Paësiello (1741-1816) was born and died in Italy, but his activities extended to St. Petersburg and

CIMAROSA: 'MATRIMONIO SEGRETO'

his influence throughout Europe. The frequency with which his name occurs on early American concert programs indicates the universality of his popularity. Of the names of his more than one hundred operas it is necessary to remember only that of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, first produced in St. Petersburg in 1782; the work itself was effectually put out of memory by Rossini's brilliant setting of the same text. In those days it was deemed blasphemy to attempt such a re-setting, for Paësiello was an idol. Rossini was mighty careful about it, called his opera *Almaviva* and apologized for his presumption. Yet the Romans would have none of it. Rossini got angry, revised the score till finally fate decided in his favor—and Paësiello's light went out.

No one has written another 'Secret Marriage'; hence Cimarosa's light still burns. Perhaps that is the only reason. Yet he had more real genius than the others; at any rate he is typical of his age. He has been said to 'sum up the entire period from Scarlatti to Rossini,' both in *seria* and *buffa*.^{*} He is a contemporary of Mozart, born seven years earlier (1749) and died a decade after him (1801). His masterpiece was produced in Vienna, a year after Mozart's death. In general aspects he is not unlike him; but he is simpler, thinner, in every way. His developments are shorter, his form less varied, his orchestra less poetic, less colorful. But the delicate melody of *Il Matrimonio segreto* charms nevertheless, just as its amusing situations and rare humor still tickle our intellectual palate. The gay superficiality of the Italian character finds one of its most delightful expressions here.

The 'secret marriage' is that of Paolino, a young lawyer, and Carolina, the daughter of the rich merchant Geronimo. In order to offset the shock which the discovery of the match will give to the avaricious father, Paolino endeavors to make a match between Carolina's sister Elisetta and his rich friend,

^{*} Apthorp: *op. cit.*

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Count Robinson. But the count prefers Carolina too, and is readily accepted by old Geronimo as prospective son-in-law. Meantime Robinson's older sister, Fidalma, has looked with unwelcome favor upon Paolino, who, in despair, attempts flight with his young wife. They are, however, discovered and their secret is revealed. The outraged Geronimo is finally appeased when the count shifts his affection to Elisetta after all.

The lack of real action in this piece is made up for, as in most operas of the school, by good situations and opportunities for virtuoso singing: the rapid *parlandi*, *staccati*, triplets, running passages in unison with the orchestra and occasional *coloratura*. A lightness, a soft whispered charm flits hither and thither through the score. Carolina's aria, '*Perdonate, Signor mio*,' gives us an earlier example of the fleet vocal melody which we know from Rossini. Paolino's persuasive whispering finds a charming note in his '*Priache spunti in ciel l'aurore*.' Their duet in the last finale is still more secretive. The count lays bare all his shortcomings (so that Elisetta shall not desire him for a husband) in an aria, '*Son lunatico*,' that is full of humor and rhythmic life. Rhythm indeed is the very soul of this opera—beyond that it seems to have no substance. Whirring, gliding, creeping melodies and a light touch of innocent drollery that passes the time—that is all. We can easily understand the story of Emperor Leopold, who after the Vienna première gave a magnificent supper to all the performers and musicians, and then made them do it all over again!

II

It is all so light and carefree and so immaculate in this Italian period. Nothing counts but form, faultless construction, the formal perfection of a thoroughly conventionalized style; easy playful routine gradually

THE 'INTERNATIONAL' ITALIANS

supersedes real solid technique. The subjects need not be original, if only they are amusing. They must not strain the imagination, or presuppose too much. It must all be plain as day; situations are the chief necessity; the text, the verses do not count. Vocalization is more caressing to the ear than declamation, *parlando* recitatives speed up the dialogue so that its qualities escape detection; sharp rhythmic characterization is an essential factor. Deep sentiment is excluded by an amiable convention. An Italian audience must be amused, not moved.

Now on this road it is very easy to fall into vapid platitudes, mere routine without any substance whatever. Generally these Italians gave little heed to what was going on outside of Italy, the symphonic writers of Germany and France they either did not know or did not understand. Seriousness, learning or depth were resented. Success, momentary success, the captivating of audiences by easy shallow means was the aim. For the composers who worked entirely in Italy an early oblivion was therefore in store. Who ever hears the names of Vittorio Trento, Vincenzo Frederici, Giuseppe Mosca, Pietro Generali, of Lavigna, Paresi and Tadolini nowadays? Yet they were among the most successful of their time. Nicola Antonio Zingarelli (1752-1837), who was a better musician than most of them and a pedagogue of no mean significance, may stand as the typical example of this willful ignorance. Mozart and Beethoven meant nothing to him, but his thirty-four operas were vehicles for the triumphs of a Marchesi, Crescentini, Rubinelli, of a Catalani and a Grassini. That sufficed.

But there were others, whose fame or spirit of adventure called them to other lands, and who did not remain entirely deaf to the new voices that rose from the north. Among them were Ferdinando Paër (1771-1839), Francesco Morlacchi (1784-1841), Giovanni Pa-

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cini (1796-1867), Saverio Mercadante (1797-1825). Paër and Morlacchi both had charge of the Italian opera at Dresden, where even the native Weber could not get himself heard against the latter. Paër listened to Mozart's music in Vienna and was acquainted with Beethoven. His *Eleonora* (Dresden, 1805) was founded on the same subject as *Fidelio*. Napoleon finally lured him to Paris, and there Paër ensconced himself firmly until, during the reign of Louis-Philippe, Rossini forced his retreat. *Camilla* (Vienna, 1799) was his most famous opera. With its somewhat Romantic flavor, its songs and ballads, it shows the German influence clearly. *Le Maître de chapelle* (1821), which long preserved a fitful existence on the Paris stage, is chiefly concerned with the musical parody which formed a favorite subject of the Italian *buffa* of the time (witness the music lesson scene of Rossini's *Barbiere*, the numerous parodies of serious song, of grand opera, of symphonic conducting, etc., that occur in the comic operas of this period). Of the rest of Paër's forty operas hardly the names are remembered. Morlacchi's case is even worse. Except for an occasional aria that vocal teachers unearth for the good of their pupils' agility he is entirely *passé*. He, too, wrote a *Barbiere*, and some twenty other operas, mostly comic. His *Danaïdes* (1810) notably shows the mixture of Italian and German styles.

Pacini's sphere of influence reached to Rio de Janeiro, where one of his operas, *Niccolò de' Lapi*, had its première. In his 'first period' he produced forty operas in twenty years, but his best work was done after 1840, when the competition with Rossini spurred him to higher efforts. *Saffo*, *Medea*, *La Regina di Cipro* are the names of the most important of his ninety operas. Mercadante, the last of our group, had Rome, Bologna, Milan, Venice, Vienna, Madrid and Lisbon as the scenes of his triumphs. He was a pupil of Zing-

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arelli. He, too, lives on only in the vocal studio; his operas are distinguished by little more than their noisy rhythm and hasty workmanship.

Against these international Italians there stands another group: foreigners who have turned Italian. Among them Simon Mayr (1763-1845) is foremost. A native of Bavaria, and at first only occupied with church music, he turned to the operatic stage upon the advice of Piccini. He was rather a profound student and stands as perhaps the best example of the German-Italian fusion of styles. Brilliant orchestration is his particular virtue. Of his more than seventy operas we should mention *Saffo* (1794), the two versions of *Lodoïska*, *Ginevra* (1801), *Adelasia ed Aleramo* (1807), *Medea* (1812), *Rosa bianca e rosa rossa* (1814). Among his pupils was Donizetti.

Vicente Martin y Soler (called Martini lo Spagnuolo by the Italians) was a Spaniard by birth (1754). He died in St. Petersburg in 1806, where he directed the Italian opera till the French opera superseded it in 1801. His *Cosa rara* (1786) achieved an immense success in Mozart's time. (Mozart quotes a passage from it in the famous supper scene of *Don Giovanni*.) By 1794 it had experienced fifty-nine performances. More successful still was *L'arbore di Diana*, given eighty-six times between 1787 and 1804. Marcos Antonio Portugal (1762-1830), the greatest of Portuguese composers, completes this group. He brought out an opera every year or so, now for the Spaniards or his own countrymen, now for the Italians, now for Paris, and even for Brazil. He died in Rio de Janeiro in 1830, after having written forty operas or more.

Mozart's quotation from Martin's *Cosa rara* (quite a common custom among composers of the time, by the way, these quotations) invites comparisons. Bie points out that for every *Cosa rara* passage a parallel may be found in Mozart. "The brilliantly concise form, the

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rather earnest minor passages, the bantering duets of the second couple, the dramatic ensembles, the jests in the darkness, the *Zitto* songs, the *Buon Giorno* greetings, the gruesome aria about jealousy, the beginning of the A major aria of Lilla—it is the bridge from Mozart to Rossini * * *.' But, as our authority says elsewhere, 'where Mozart has a soul, the Italians have conventions.'

Soon there will be nothing else left. It is the darkness before the light. What Apthorp calls 'the great Italian musical decadence of the first half of the nineteenth century' is gradually setting in—'the result of musical in-breeding utterly uncompensated for by the introduction of any fresh foreign strain. Music was synonymous with opera. Instrumental music was so neglected that a Haydn symphony had to be described on programs as a *sinfonia classica in quattro pezzi* so that the audience would know what it was. With this generation, indeed, came the great split between Italy and Germany: a difference in national temperament which existed hitherto gave way to a total divergence of artistic purpose. 'Before long German music got to be utterly unintelligible to the average Italian, who, whether it was a drinking song or a symphony or an opera finale, shrugged his shoulders and lumped it all indiscriminately together as *musica di chiesa* (church music).'

To quote Mr. Apthorp further: 'Everything suffered; Italian musical instruction deteriorated, neither was it much heeded; for the younger generation was running from the conservatories before its technical education was half completed, so that the whole musical production of the country soon began to labor under the most terrible handicap that can be set upon any kind of creative art, a defective and inadequate technique. It did not take a generation for the Italians to fall, as musical craftsmen, immeasurably behind the Germans,

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whom they had once taught. The whole musical standard was lowered, and the land which had once produced such unsurpassed experts in techniques as Palestrina, Giovanni Gabrieli, and the Naninis, plunged down into the ignominy of looking upon poor Saverio Mercadante as (heaven save the mark!) a "*gran' contrappuntista*".'

That there was, however, no dearth of genius, is apparent from the citation of the following names, still luminous in the operatic firmament of to-day: Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868), Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), Vincenzo Bellini (1802-35). The fact that these men were able to achieve what they did achieve is indeed remarkable, rising as they did in a generation so lacking in a really sound knowledge of the art.

III

Rossini, the greatest genius among them, is also the best example of his generation. He owed next to nothing to learning: a mere smattering of 'musical grammar' sufficed to set him up in business as an operatic composer. And still he has been called a reformer of Italian opera. What Mr. Streatfeild calls a 'reform of the school of Paësiello, with its uniformity of melodic type, nerveless and conventional orchestration and intolerable prolixity' was simply a fresh endowment of these worn-out forms with a new fund of genuine inspiration—a freshening up which perpetuated them far beyond their proper time. Rossini had melodically a most fertile brain, and a 'facility that may fairly be called damnable.'* He took up the *opera buffa* with a real zest and gave it new life, but a life quite in the spirit of his predecessors. And so he triumphed over Cimarosa, Paësiello and all the rest. But reform was

* W. F. Apthorp: *op. cit.*

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far from his mind. He did not abandon the silly ornaments and coloratura, for instance; he merely wrote them down irrevocably, so that nothing was left to the pleasure of the singers. In *opera seria* he simply ignored every dramatic consideration and frankly played into the bravura singer's hand.

But his power went beyond mere versatility and technical genius. The study of German composers had opened to him the rich opportunities of orchestral resource. Also, he recognized that the arid stretches of *recitativo secco* were so much time wasted in catering to the sensuous appetite of his audiences. Hence, in *Elisabetta* (1815) he began to abandon that time-honored style, to the disgust of his Neapolitan colleagues, and in *Otello* (1816) he completed the transition to a style of accompanied declamation calculated to sustain musical interest throughout the score. He gave great attention to the enrichment of the accompaniment, to the introduction of new effects of rhythm, harmony, tone color, and 'sought to weld together successive items into irresistible cumulatives of effect.' Yet in all this he showed no real understanding of the musico-dramatic idea, and since that is the direction of all recognized operatic reforms Rossini can not be accounted a reformer.

Tancredi in 1813 established his fame in *opera seria*, *L'Italiana in Algeri* did the same in *buffa*. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* came in 1815.

At the end of that year Rossini had contracted to write an opera for the carnival of 1816, to be performed at the Argentina theatre in Rome. The first half was to be finished by January 20 and the whole opera to be ready for performance during the first part of February. The choice of a libretto depended, it seems, more or less upon the pleasure of the censor. But the censor was slow in looking over the projects, so in order to play safe Rossini and the manager resorted to an old

'IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA'

and well-tried subject—Beaumarchais' 'Barber of Seville.' Paësiello's setting of the self-same subject had been a favorite since 1780; Isouard had used the same material (1790) and Mozart had given an inimitable picture of its principal figures in his 'Marriage of Figaro.' But Sterbini, the librettist collaborating with Rossini, was very careful to avoid duplication of the scenes of Paësiello's *Barbiere*, while the composer tried by every means to avoid the suspicion of rivalry. It was of no avail; the public resented his presumption and, other untoward circumstances contributing, the first performance, on February 16, 1816, was a dismal failure. Rossini, apparently undisturbed, was already sound asleep when his friends came to offer their condolences! But he refused to conduct the second performance. He had, however, meantime pruned down his score, substituted the Count's beautiful cavatina for the Spanish song originally interpolated, and in a day failure was turned into a success that has already lasted a century.

Sterbini's book treats of the story of Count Almaviva's adventurous marriage to the ingenuous Rosina, the ward of Doctor Bartolo. Like all fictitious wards, Rosina is an heiress, and as is usual with guardians, Bartolo has designs both on her and her money. But her flame has been kindled by one Lindoro, who is none other than the Count Almaviva in disguise, who has planned not to reveal his exalted identity to her until she has proven her love by marrying him. His absurdly naïve attempts to forestall the wary but easily duped Bartolo furnish the plot of the opera. His mentor in these attempts is Figaro, the town barber, gossip, intriguer and general factotum, whose easy access to people's houses gives him quite extraordinary facility for managing difficult situations.

Having with the Count overheard Bartolo's intentions to marry Rosina that very day, Figaro (properly bribed) introduces the noble lover into the house of Bartolo in the guise of a drunken soldier demanding to be quartered. But the surly Doctor produces a certificate exempting him from this duty, a quarrel ensues, and a detachment of soldiers arrive most

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inopportunately, with an officer who orders the impostor's arrest. Figaro tries again. In Act II the Count presents himself as a substitute for Rosina's music-master, Basilio (himself an intriguer of the malignant type), who is reported too ill to leave his house. He actually gives Rosina a lesson, while Figaro, arriving with his barber's paraphernalia, tries to divert Bartolo's attention. But presently Basilio himself appears—entirely well—and a highly ludicrous scene follows, during which the conspirators hustle him 'off to bed.' Now the Doctor becomes wary and, overhearing the Count's entreaties to Rosina, breaks out in fury, while Rosina, the Count and Figaro scurry off in different directions. But the Count has been able to plan an elopement with Rosina that very night.

During the next scene Bartolo learns the identity of Rosina's lover, Basilio is sent off to fetch the notary (who has, however, been already engaged by Figaro), and Bartolo convinces his ward that he whom she thinks to be her lover is only scheming to abduct her for the benefit of Count Almaviva. Upon this revelation she consents to marry Bartolo himself. While the prospective bridegroom is away to summon the watch that is to arrest the abductors, the Count and Figaro arrive. 'Lindoro,' at first repulsed by Rosina, reveals himself and quickly turns the tables. Basilio returns with the notary before they can escape, and, bribed to assent, allows that dignity to tie the happy knot before Bartolo returns. The latter and Basilio are consoled by the Count's magnanimous bequest of Rosina's fortune, to be divided among them.

Thus the action will be seen to form a sort of prologue to that of Mozart's 'Figaro,' which recounts the story of Almaviva's infidelity after his marriage. Modern comparisons are therefore more likely to be drawn between Rossini and Mozart than Rossini and Paësiello. But they are much less fair. For Rossini represents a real development of the school of Paësiello and Cimarosa, endowing it with new life, melodic variety, rhythmic piquancy and freer handling of orchestral resources, while Mozart to him is only a remote influence, discernible in this or that melodic turn and here and there a figure of accompaniment, a modulation or cadence. Mozart had distanced the goal of *opera buffa*

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writers and imbued his best works with a deeper human significance. Rossini had no ambition but to amuse and to charm the sense of hearing. To do this and be sure of immediate effect one must not strain either the reasoning powers or the imagination of one's audience! Philosophy is surely not the province of opera. So let our characters be Harlequin and Pantaloon, our plot the well-worn marriage by stealth, and our music pure simple melodies and naked rhythm. Here we have the absolute reign of form, heeding no demands of dramatic expression, of pseudo-realism, of ethical philosophies. The complications of the action are developed and resolved in the dialogue (*secco recitative*), the musical numbers are each conceived in one spirit—it may be a serenade, a love duet, or a song of calumny—it may convey a sentiment or explain a character, but never at the expense of melody and form. Characterization with Rossini is quite a different matter than with Mozart—not so subtle perhaps and more superficial surely, but none the less effective. Rhythm is his most potent medium—Figaro's trifling, light-hearted nature comes out in waltz rhythms and rollicking triplets, Bartolo's pompous, silly conceit in decisive dotted rhythms, Basilio's intriguing nature in hesitating staccatos and sliding figures. In the ensembles this method is none too consistently carried out—the music usually carries the day—but there are instances, as in the duet between Bartolo and the Count (Act II), where the prattling doctor keeps up a continuous rapid fire of reiterated demi-semi-quavers against the graceful, flowing melody of the Count (the same as that which accompanies his first entry in Act I), till finally the latter himself is carried away by this whirlpool of language. (This fast reiteration of notes, a constant flow of rapid syllables, requiring a real virtuosity of speech, is a favorite form of melody with Rossini and he employs it with often truly comical ef-

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fect.) But these characterizations are only skin-deep. We must not look for tonal representation of womanly virtue in Rosina (as she is in Mozart) or for any peculiarly heroic traits in Almaviva. In the first Finale he enters in the dress of a soldier. Very well, soldier he is—hear the military motif in the music? Figures these are, all of them; masks. But delightful in their artificiality, fascinating so long as their master (that man in the orchestra pit, frantically waving a stick) pulls their strings.

There are sixteen pieces in the 'Barber'—seven of them solos, not counting Almaviva's lovely serenade in the Introduction, which is all he has. Rosina, too, has only one, besides the piece to be interpolated in the music lesson scene; but that has the most beautiful melody of the whole opera—'*Una voce poco fa*.' What essence of pure youthful love there is in that! But what possibilities for prima donnas there lurk in that famous Music Lesson. The trio which Rossini originally wrote for this scene was, together with the overture, lost before the work was printed. It must have been spirited away by the fairy that presides over the destinies of prima donnas—for that bravura piece of her own choice is the apex of the whole performance. What will she sing?—what interesting speculations! Figaro is next: his '*Largo al factotum*' is too famous to require comment, a real buffo piece with unlimited buffo possibilities for an Edouard de Reszke or a Scotti. Basilio's '*Calunnia è un venticello*' is another such, full of witty rhythmic characterization, comical dynamic contrasts and even subtle harmonic insinuations. Bartolo has no less than three solos, one in Act I in which he vaunts his cleverness, one at the beginning of Act II in which he airs his suspicions (more fun), and later an arietta in dance rhythm, with dance steps at the end (pre-figuring Donizetti). There remains only the governess Marzellina, whose aria is usu-

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ally cut, and the servants Fiorillo and Ambrosio, who, like the Officer and the Notary, appear only in ensembles.

Of the three duets, the letter scene between Figaro and Rosina is the most charming. There are, besides, a trio, a quintet and the two finales. Much Mozartian ingenuity has gone into the making of these, and many a dramatic touch foreshadows Verdi—impressive unisons, a poignant moment of silence (before the arrival of the watch). The discreet use of the chorus, mere decorative spots of background, not at all incongruous, should be noted, and last but not least the dramatic use of the canon, in the scene before the officer, when each of the various contesting parties presents his grievance before the other has finished his say. Twice this ingenuous complication takes place, with increasing rhythmic interest, till they stop from sheer exhaustion. Here Rossini sowed a most fruitful seed.

The score of 'Barbiere' (at first called '*Almaviva, ossia l'inutile precauzione*' out of respect for Paësiello) was written in the almost incredible time of twenty-six days, librettist and composer working side by side. It is perhaps for that very reason the most spontaneous of Rossini's works, and the only one of his Italian period which still commands interest to-day. *La gazza ladra*, which has so silly a libretto that its music (which has been assayed as equal to that of the 'Barber') has not been able to save it from oblivion. *Cenerantola* (1817) is another comic opera that ranks close to Rossini's comic masterpiece.

Rossini's Italian tragic operas hardly count to-day. *Semiramide* (1823), which has been singled out as showing especially the influence of Mozart, is perhaps the best of them. Its scene is laid in Babylonia and its libretto tells of the vengeance visited by Arsaces, the son of Ninus and Semiramis, upon his guilty mother. Like Agamemnon, Ninus has been slain by his wife

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with the aid of her paramour, Assur. Rossini rises to unwonted dramatic power in this score, especially in the scene where the ghost of Ninus appears, and in the one in which Assur gives vent to his passionate remorse.

Mosè in Egitto (1827) also has a great deal of power. Like Cherubini's *Joseph*, it has been made to do service as an oratorio, both in England and America. *Elisabetta* (1815), *Armida* (1817), *Otello*, *Ricciardo e Zoraida* (1818) and *Zelmira* (1852, Vienna) are the titles of the more important among the rest. *Guillaume Tell*, Rossini's great French effort, is treated in Chapter VI (pp. 163 ff).

IV

Rossini was the triumph of the age. A host of imitators raised their voices after him. They are nearly all forgotten. Donizetti and Bellini are the best of them by far. They brought nothing essentially new, but they cultivated the splendidly mobile, glowing Italian melody with religious fervor, with a tendency to sweet sentimentality rather than the ruthless brilliance which was characteristic of Rossini. To this they added a predilection for mellifluous ensembles in which the individual voices have a virtuoso independence almost equal to the solo, and in which their glow is enhanced rather than diminished by contrast and combination with the others. The *Lucia* sextet is the type of this virtuoso ensemble. Neither Donizetti nor Bellini had the vigorous vivacity and wit of Rossini. They both sought to imitate him, but not in his more vulgar tendencies. They exalted the vocal element even more than he, lacking his technical resourcefulness and especially his variety and originality in orchestration. Neither cared much more about dramatic principles than he, though Donizetti showed dramatic intensity

DONIZETTI AND BELLINI

at times and Bellini could rise to a certain noble solemnity in his melody. Neither spent more effort than he upon preliminary study and both, like him, relied upon their natural gifts to carry them through. To complete the analogy, both, like Rossini, started from Italy and gravitated to Paris.

They were rivals. Until 1835, when Donizetti scored heavily with *Lucia*, they were neck to neck in the race for public favor. In that year Bellini died, at the age of thirty-four, and left the field to Donizetti. Bellini's death in Paris was the occasion for solemn honors and sincere mourning on the part of composers and singers. He was the more sensitive, poetic nature of the two; Donizetti, more vigorous, and also more careless and uneven, had not the naïve, perennial charm of Bellini's melodies. A prodigious worker, he wrote sixty-five operas to Bellini's ten. A more assiduous seeker after momentary success, he swung back and forth between the Italian and the French styles, between tragic opera, *buffa* and *comique*. He became insane and died in his birthplace, Bergamo.

Donizetti first aroused attention with *Enrico di Borgogna* (1818). Up to 1830 he had written thirty-one operas, in frank imitation of Rossini. *Anna Bolena*, in 1830, began a better period. *L'Elisir d'amore* (Milan, 1832), *La Fille du régiment* (Paris, 1840), and *Don Pasquale* (Paris, 1843) are his comic masterpieces; *Lucrezia Borgia* (Milan, 1833), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Naples, 1835), *La favorite* (Paris, 1840), and *Linda di Chamounix* (Vienna, 1842), the most important of his tragic works. These latter, beloved of operatic audiences in the fifties and sixties, are sung to-day, if at all, to afford a brilliant prima donna an opportunity to shine as she could shine in nothing else. Few, indeed, are able to carry off these bravura parts at all in anything like the way that a Pasta, a Grisi or Lind could do. Musically in these serious operas Donizetti is much

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more superficial than in the comic ones. Some brilliant ensemble is always the best thing in the score. The rest is according to fixed convention. Fine flowing arias, with plenty of bravura, duets of the simplest formula (first one, then the other, then both together), choruses in unison. There is many a fine thread of melody in the accompaniment, too. The whole thing is one surge of melody rising to climax after climax, now of luscious glow, now of glittering brilliance. Suddenly, here and there, will follow a quietly flowing, smiling passage, more mellifluous even than the rest, over a quiet accompaniment of reiterated chords, measured staccati of the simplest harmonic construction. In moments like these Verdi seems to smile through the film that separates the period from the future. Little more than this generalization is needed to acquaint the reader with the nature of these works. We shall confine ourselves to a résumé of their plots and an enumeration of outstanding features.

Lucrezia Borgia is a tale of blood and cruelty. The title rôle represents the wife of the Duke of Ferrara, who, having a son by a former paramour, has come secretly to Venice to visit her secret offspring. Gennaro has been brought up by a fisherman, but has risen rapidly after entering the army, by virtue of gallant conduct in battle. Lucrezia makes his acquaintance through the young nobility of Venice, who are among his friends, but she reveals neither her identity nor their relationship. Flattered at first by her interest, Gennaro quickly turns from his new acquaintance when he learns that she is of the hated house of the cruel Borgias, and herself not free from the stain of crime. In his rage he tears her name from the palace gates and is promptly condemned to death for his offense by the Duke, who, jealous over his wife's favoring of the young man, orders her to offer him the poison-cup. She pleads for him in vain; her pleadings only confirm the Duke's jealousy, since she has not shown a like solicitude for other victims. But after Gennaro drinks the draught (the Duke having left the room), she saves her son's life by an antidote, urging him at the same time to leave the city at

'LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR'

once. Instead he remains to attend a banquet with his friend, the Duke d'Orsini, at the palace of the Princess Negroni. Here Lucrezia, knowing that the nobles who had turned Gennaro against her were assembled, sees an opportunity to carry out her revenge. She contrives to have the wine which they drink poisoned, and watches the effect of her cruel plan from behind a curtain. To her consternation she finds Gennaro among her victims. She again offers him an antidote, which he refuses to accept while his friends are near death. In utter despair, Lucrezia reveals her motherhood, but is thrust back by her son, who would prefer death to owning such a mother. She embraces him as he falls and, when the Duke enters to witness her victory, she reveals her secret and dies.

Full of delicious but hardly significant melodies, *Lucrezia* can lay no claim to consideration as a music drama. There is an occasional touch of pathos, but in the main it relies for its expression on the voices of the singers—who are no more.

Lucia di Lammermoor is founded on a Scott novel. Scott's novels were then highly popular and did service for a number of operas whose plots are uniformly confused. *Lucia* is no exception, highly condensed version though it is.

Sir Henry Ashton, the Scottish knight, deeply involved financially and politically and engaged in a dangerous plot with his followers, plans to marry his sister Lucy to Sir Arthur Bucklaw, a man of wealth and influence. But Lucy is secretly in love with Edgar of Ravenswood, her brother's chief enemy. The two meet clandestinely before Edgar is about to leave for France on a state mission. He desires to ask Sir Henry's permission to marry Lucy, but is dissuaded from so dangerous an undertaking. Meantime Ashton has learned the secret from Lucy's tutor, Bide-the-Bent, and is furious. In Act II he tries to force his sister into the marriage he desires, pleading his own impending ruin. Upon her refusal he makes use of a forged letter purporting to come from her lover and proving him faithless. In her misery she now consents to save her brother, weds Bucklaw, and only on the marriage night learns the truth, as Edgar bursts into the room, upbraids her fiercely and denounces the Ashton family. A duel between

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him and Sir Henry is arranged for the morning, while the bride is led away. Presently the guests learn that she has become insane and has murdered her husband. Entering she calls upon Edgar and falls dying. Upon hearing of this catastrophe, Edgar, who has been awaiting the morning among the tombs of his ancestors, ends his life by stabbing himself.

The finest thing in *Lucia* is the sextet, still sung wherever the required vocal ladies and gentlemen are gathered together; its lovely coloraturas are almost exciting in their passionate sensuousness. The mad-scene still gives prima donnas an opportunity to be sublimely ridiculous, by singing a waltz, ending in an elaborate cadenza in which the mad heroine vies with a solo flute for the agility record.

La Favorita takes us to mediæval Spain. The title refers to the favorite of Alphonso, the King of Castile, his beautiful mistress Leonora, whom the Pope will not allow him to marry, since that involves the putting aside of the queen. Leonora is being maintained in magnificence on the Island of St. Leon, and there has fallen in love with a young novice of the monastery, Fernando. Fernando has also, while observing her at her devotions, secretly conceived a passion for her. This he confesses to his superior and is promptly thrust out into the world as unworthy of the vow. He is sent for by Leonora, declares his love and learns that it is returned. By his love's aid he obtains an army commission, distinguishes himself and returns victorious. The king is again warned by Balthasar, Fernando's former superior, to cease his illicit relation with Leonora. Having learned that a bond of affection exists between her and his returning hero, he resolves to consummate their happiness. He advances Fernando and promises him the beautiful Leonora as his bride. Now Leonora, to ward off later trouble, commissions her attendant, Inez, to tell him of her past relations with the king. But the latter intercepts the messenger upon learning her mission. The marriage proceeds and soon after Fernando learns the truth from a courtier's insolent behavior. Grief and shame drive him from the court and he seeks refuge in the monastery, whither he is followed by Leonora. After convincing him of her intention not to deceive him, of her sincerity in longing

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for a pure love, she obtains his forgiveness and expires in his arms.

La Favorita is probably the most carefully written of Donizetti's operas. Perhaps the fact that it was written for the Paris Opera had something to do with this. But the most popular piece of the opera, the beautiful romanza '*Spirito gentil*,' was originally composed for the earlier *Le Duc d'Albe*, which was never performed.

Linda di Chamounix is an impossible tangle of love, intrigue and misunderstanding. It recounts the misfortunes of Linda, the beautiful daughter of a peasant couple threatened with eviction. They shall be saved if Linda consents to marry the Marquis de Boisfleury, but the honesty of his intentions is doubted, and the girl is sent to Paris to escape him. Her intended guardian there having died, she is left friendless. But Carlo, an artist with whom she is in love, has followed her from her home and turns out to be a Marquis himself, and the son of the relentless landlady who has turned her parents out of house and home. He surrounds her with luxury, preparatory to marrying her. There she is discovered by her father who concludes that she has gone wrong. The Marchioness, furious over her son's intention to marry a peasant girl, threatens her with prison and quite naturally the poor girl loses her reason. But old Antonio, who has brought her to Paris, discovers her and takes her back home. Carlo follows her, restores her reason by singing a love-song to her, at the same time melting the heart of the Marchioness. And it all ends as it should—in opera.

Linda requires no comment but that it was Donizetti's last important work. It was written for Vienna and earned him the title of imperial court composer and conductor.

V

In his comic operas Donizetti shows more vitality and also more solidity of structure. To begin with, his texts are better. They are so common and well-tried

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a substance that their essentials are immediately grasped and easily conveyed. The more buffonesque they are the better. They are more true to their period and consequently better appreciated by a later. Where *Lucia* is fading, *Don Pasquale* is gaining new favor. In Germany it has been newly revised, as has also *L'Elisir d'amore*, by no lesser a musician than Mottl.

L'Elisir d'amore is a typical Italian *opera buffa*, both in text and music. The libretto, by Romani, tells of the flirtations of the village belle, Adina, whose two sweethearts, Nemorino, a young farmer, and Belcore, a soldier, are being driven to extremities in their courtship. Nemorino buys a supposed elixir of love from a village soothsayer, Dulcamara; but gets nothing but a bottle of wine. The wine half intoxicates him, which so shocks Adina that she declares herself for Belcore. Nemorino tries another bottle, with worse results: the marriage contract with his rival is to be signed next day. Moreover, he has allowed Belcore to enlist him in order to secure enough money to pay for the second 'elixir.' Meantime the other village girls have begun to flirt with him, for he has suddenly become a 'match' through the death of his wealthy uncle (of which he is as yet ignorant). Adina, stung into jealousy, postpones the signing of the marriage contract and looks so dejected that the quack is moved to tell her of his deception. Convinced of Nemorino's sincerity, she now decides in his favor. Belcore, claiming his recruit, since the bonus money has been half spent, is paid off by the choice of his heart herself, who leaves him disconsolate as she bestows herself upon his rival.

L'Elisir hardly yields anything to *Don Pasquale* in charm, though its text is inane in comparison. It is still thoroughly alive as a leading example of *opera buffa*. Its vivid, passionate melodies, sometimes in *romanza* style, its fascinating whisper chorus of women's voices, its lovely finale will continue to charm musical palates unspoiled for delicious trifles.

La Fille du régiment is as French as the 'Elixir' is Italian. The whole outfit of the *opéra comique* is here: contrast of

Fanny Persiani and Antonio Tamburini in 'L'Élixir d'Amore'
From a colored engraving by C. Voq





'L'ELISIR D'AMORE'; 'LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT'

rural and court atmosphere, soldiers, prayer, romanza, chansons, Tyrolienne, etc., etc. The daughter of the regiment, Marie, is a *vivandière* attached to a regiment of grenadiers stationed in Tyrol during the French occupation. She is thought to be an orphan, having been discovered on the battlefield by Sergeant Sulpice. A letter found upon her, addressed to the Marchioness of Berkenfeld, has been carefully preserved by the sergeant. She is the darling of all the soldiers, but Tony, a young Swiss, is her sweetheart. He has saved her life. Taken for a spy at first, he is, when his love for Marie is known, persuaded to join the soldiers' ranks. He is even permitted to marry his sweetheart, but the Marchioness, to whom the letter is addressed and who turns out to be none other than the girl's aunt, arrives in time to prevent the match and takes Marie to her château. Marie becomes a lady, but her heart is still with the regiment. She receives lessons in 'real' music, but when the old sergeant comes to visit she sings the old regimental songs with a zest that quite upsets her aunt. She is to wed a foolish young aristocrat, but her affection for Tony has not waned. She finally consents under duress. At that moment the regiment, with Tony himself at its head—as colonel, having risen by bravery—marches down the street to pay Marie a visit. Her lover enters, hearts overflow, they embrace—but the Marchioness is obdurate. She finally reveals the fact that Marie is her own daughter by an early *mésalliance*. Marie, broken-hearted, prepares to obey, but at last the Marchioness, out of pity, relents. The aristocratic friends of the would-be noble bridegroom have been waiting all the while and now retire, quite disgusted. But Tony and Marie embrace, to the cheers of the entire 'Twenty-first.'

In this opera the composer enters into the rhythmic life of military tunes with a spirit that bespeaks natural predilection. (In his youth Donizetti actually escaped the drudgeries of counterpoint by entering the army.) Sharp accents, concise construction, gracefully symmetrical ensembles distinguish the score, and a certain French dash in the style of the songs betrays their writer's adaptability. Altogether *La Fille du régiment* might pass for a neat example of the *opéra comique*. It is still a favorite in France and also in Germany.

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In *Don Pasquale* Donizetti turns Italian once more. Salvatore Gammerano is the author of the libretto, another story of intrigue by which two young lovers gain their ends.

This time, instead of the heroine, it is the young man (Ernesto) who is to be sacrificed on the altar of Mammon. It is his uncle, the wealthy old bachelor, Don Pasquale, who has picked the wealthy but otherwise unattractive partner for him. The young lady of Ernesto's choice is Norina. The supposed ally of the uncle is a Dr. Malatesta, who, however, in reality favors the young people. He persuades the uncle to punish his nephew by getting a wife himself and offers to procure him one. This is no other than the pretty Norina herself, who, by the help of the Doctor and a friend masquerading as notary, enters into a bogus marriage contract with the old bachelor. After the ceremony she immediately reveals herself as such an outrageous spendthrift and coquette that the supposed husband is most anxious to rid himself of her. When he learns that the contract is not binding he is only too glad to hand her over to his delighted nephew.

Don Pasquale has been called 'the neatest follower of the *Barbiere*.' As an example of Italian buffa it is a gem reminiscent of an earlier time. Into it Donizetti has poured some of the most sparkling music. Melodies flit in and out, now through the voice parts, now the orchestra, it whispers, giggles, it frolics and bubbles over. The ensembles, of ultimate rhythmic conciseness, a lovely trio, a masterful finale (second act), a chorus of servants overflowing with merriment; these are some of the sparkles of the gem. No wonder that the first Paris audience was taken off its feet. Grisi, Mario, Tamburini and Lablache were in the cast.

VI

Bellini began in earnest (after some tentative works) with *Il pirate*, which had an enormous success at the Milan Scala in 1827. *La Straniera* (1829) made even

LA SONNAMBULA; NORMA; I PURITANI

greater furore. *Montecchi e Capuletti* (Venice, 1830) and *La Sonnambula* followed. He was criticized for the lack of broadly designed vocal pieces and an all too simple orchestration. *Norma* showed far higher ambitions than its predecessors and, with the aid of the great Malibran, scored an extraordinary triumph (Milan, 1831). In Paris, where he was well received, Bellini wrote but one opera, *I Puritani*, given at the Théâtre Italien in 1835.

La Sonnambula, which has been called the happiest example of Bellini's naïve charm, suffers from a foolish plot. It recounts the nocturnal adventures of Amina, a country girl, who is afflicted with somnambulism. She walks into the room of a young lord, Rodolfo, at the inn and so compromises herself with her lover, Elvino. Worry over this aggravates her condition and the next night she crosses the mill stream by a narrow bridge. Elvino is conveniently at hand on the other side, and, effectually convinced of her innocence, receives her in his arms.

Norma is generally accounted Bellini's highest achievement. It is the story of Medea in Gallic garb. Norma is the daughter of Oroviso, the chief priest of the Druids, and herself priestess. She is in love with Pollione, a Roman officer, secretly weds him and has two sons. Pollione has, however, shifted his affection to Adalgisa, a younger priestess. After a ceremony during which Norma has prophesied the downfall of Rome and encouraged resistance to the invaders (for she still remains faithful to her religious vows) Pollione tries to induce Adalgisa to accompany him to Rome. But the young priestess, full of remorse, confesses all to the high priestess, who, first compassionate, is stirred to passionate jealousy when she learns that her own husband is involved. She resolves to kill her children (in Act II) but love stays her hand: she will offer *herself* as sacrifice. Adalgisa, anxious to be forgiven, tries to persuade the faithless husband to return to his wife. Instead, carried away by his own passion, Pollione tries to seize the young priestess at the very altar, for which offense he is condemned to be sacrificed. Norma is to execute the judgment, but she offers to set him free if he will abandon Adalgisa.

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He refuses, and Norma, in final despair, confesses her own guilt and ascends the pyre. Touched by this noble renunciation, Pollione is overcome with remorse, and after committing their children to the high priest, joins his wife in death.

This libretto, by the poet Romani, gave Bellini a real opportunity for noble, pathetic expression, but, judged by modern standards he has hardly shown himself equal to it. Still, there is a breadth of conception, a depth of feeling that is rather superior to the general product of the generation. The singers still exacted a good half of the composer's attention. Bearing in mind the limitations imposed by the virtuoso system, Bellini has perhaps done as well as might be expected. The nobility and classic cast of such an aria as the great '*Casta diva*' cannot escape us even to-day. Yet it is adorned with bravura passages that are absurd in relation to the dramatic situation. Melody, after all, is all we should seek in these works. The ensembles are full of them; many have become popular. The love duet of Pollione and Adalgisa is a riot of melodic fire, the duets of Norma and Adalgisa are chains of lovely melodies, in charming imitations, and weavings in and out; the final trio of Act I, the finale of Act II—melodic orgies all. Harmonically considered these things are trite, even cheap. But their very naiveté becomes their virtue when viewed from the right angle—which is no longer possible to most people. But here and there, again, the shadow of Verdi, stretching far before him, is detected by the discerning eye.

I Puritani again has the handicap of an inferior libretto. The opera is so rarely given, and then only for the sake of certain singers, that we may be excused from rehearsing the plot in full. Suffice it to say that the scene is laid in England during the Civil War and that the story concerns the love affair of Elvira, the daughter of Walton, a parliamentary leader, and Lord Talbot, a young cavalier. Incidentally the queen, Hen-

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rietta Maria, is saved by the young lord, and his love driven to distraction. He is arrested and condemned to be shot, a timely pardon arrives and Elvira recovers her reason according to the operatic fashion of the day. In melodic beauty *Puritani* is inferior only to *Norma*. It is a pity that our age can no longer enjoy these things. They are too perishable for our atmosphere of logic and skepticism. But the world will ever preserve for Bellini an affectionate memory, that 'pathetic and tender figure standing apart from an age of fustian and balderdash.'

Among the followers of Rossini there is hardly another worth mentioning. *Opera buffa* fell into utter decay, only inferior composers occupied themselves with it after Donizetti. Mercadante outlived all the other composers of the period but profited little by their experience. Niccolò Vaccai (1790-1848) is better known to-day by his vocalises than by his operas, whose names even are forgotten. Considerable popularity was achieved by the Ricci brothers, Luigi (1805-59) and Frederico (1809-77), who collaborated on a number of operas, of which only *Crispino e la Comare* had sufficient merit to get it across the borders of Italy. It is a combination of buffo elements and fairy-lore, Crispino being a poor cobbler and la Comare a fairy who helps him to fame and who, after success has turned his head, brings him to his senses again, so that he is glad to end his days in the bosom of his family. Pretty and sparkling melodies and general superiority to the mass of comic opera output after Rossini helped to keep the work alive till recent years.

Michael William Balfe (1808-1870), though an Irishman by birth and to be counted among the foremost English composers of the century, is, as far as his operas are concerned, to be considered a follower of the later Italian school. At seventeen he was sent to Rome and Milan to study and for some time appeared as

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baritone in Italian opera houses. He wrote a number of operas, in which the popular ballad occupies an important part. However, only 'The Bohemian Girl' has survived in the public esteem. 'This work,' to quote an English critic, 'lives solely by reason of the insipid tunefulness of one or two airs, regardless of the fact that the plot is transcendently foolish and that the words are a shining example of the immortal balderdash of the poet Bunn.' Balfe had the gift of melodic invention, but lacked all self-criticism and seems to have been incapable of solid workmanship.

Besides those we have mentioned Errico Petrella (1813-77), Filippo Marchetti (1831-92), Carlo Pedrotti (1817-93), Antonio Cagnoni (1828-96) are names of composers who enjoyed an ephemeral vogue, but the advent of another true genius was soon to send them all into oblivion. That genius, grown from the soil which is the substance of this chapter, was Verdi.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRAND HISTORICAL OPERA

The beginnings of 'Grand Opera'; Spontini; Auber: *Masaniello*—Rossini's *Tell*—Meyerbeer: *Robert le Diable*—*Les Huguenots*—*Le Prophète*; *L'Africaine*, *Dinorah*—Halévy: *La Juive*—Berlioz' operas.

I

WHAT we know as Grand Opera—in its narrower sense; meaning the Grand Historical Opera of Meyerbeer and its sequel—dates from the year 1828, when Auber's *Muette de Portici* was produced in Paris. To be sure the genre was created as far back as 1807, with Spontini's first 'historical opera,' *La Vestale*, but that, like its successors, is itself nothing but history to-day—a thing of the past. Poor old Spontini; his is the fate of most pioneers in art. They originate, often with much intellectual pain, they are vilified by their contemporaries and not appreciated by their public; till there comes along a greater genius, who steals their thunder and rolls it so loudly as to drown out the first timid bolts. Still, Spontini was more fortunate than most. His only misfortune was to outlive his usefulness. He did not *want* to die. No wonder: according to Wagner's recollection of him he was fully convinced that the noble art of music would die with him. From the moment that his *Vestale* (libretto by Jouy) won the 10,000 franc opera prize that Napoleon had offered (1807) and started a world-conquering career of success, Spontini had honor upon honor showered on him. As musical director of the Empress Josephine, as direc-

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tor of the Italian Opera in Paris, as court composer to Louis XVIII; as general musical director—and dictator in all things musical—under William III of Prussia, recipient of orders and university degrees, it was perhaps no wonder that he thought himself an autocrat and indispensable to the artistic world, and that, when the world no longer shared his opinion, he believed himself persecuted. Heine tells, in his Paris letters, a most amusing story of the once famous, now passé, composer, visiting Paris once more in an attempt to regain his former dignities—by means of spreading Baconian myths about his successful rival Meyerbeer. He could not even get an entrée to the director of the Opéra, says Heine, 'for here everyone has thought him dead for years, and the director has too much trouble with *living* intriguers to wish for excursions into the spirit world!'

All this is most unkind, of course, for when all is said and done, Spontini had originated the historical opera, or, in other terms, reincarnated the traditional French opera, the opera of Rameau and of Gluck. He had done it upon Gluck's lines of expressive declamation and emotional truth and dramatic *effect*—note the word. Gluck said he had sacrificed musical beauty to effect. Spontini was simply much more thoroughgoing: he sacrificed *everything* for the sake of effect—plastic, monumental, histrionic, and terpsichorean, no less than aural—all on a grand scale. Choruses, mass effects, milieu, atmosphere, decoration—all these are important elements. And in all this he was outdone by the major representatives of 'Grand Opera.'

'The masters of this genre do not invent, they discover,' says Dr. Bie. 'Effect of effects, triumph of the triumphal principle, the first true universal reign of an art which aims only at victory.' What effect this dynamic ambition had upon the orchestra may be surmised. Its weak parts became strong, its strong ones

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became brilliant. This was the generation immediately preceding Berlioz (who in his Memoirs constantly refers to Spontini with the greatest respect and couples his name with Gluck's). Beethoven was still working and demanding from the orchestra ever more profound and powerful expressions of human experience. Weber was lighting up the canvas with more vivid colors and Meyerbeer and Wagner could already be sighted in the offing.

Spontini followed his *Vestale* with *Ferdinando Cortez* and in 1819 with *Olympie*, of similar matter and treatment, the former more successful than the latter. His other operas are hardly worth mentioning. But we *should* mention the fact that his earlier operas (leaving out of consideration his youthful works in the Italian style) are of the *opéra comique* type,* for it is a significant fact that nearly all the masters of the Grand Opera were, so to speak, graduates of that pleasing, grateful and sympathetic school.

The first of these was Auber, who, when *La Muette* was produced, had already to his credit a string of charming comic operas, including *La neige* and *Le Maçon*. *La Muette de Portici* appeared, as we have said, in 1828. It was the first of three triumphant successes, which together firmly established the extraordinary vogue of the new species, the other two being Rossini's *Tell* (1829) and Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1830). These works inaugurated a new period of operatic brilliance, comparable, from the singer's standpoint at least, to the period of the Italian concert opera of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Metastasio of this new era was Eugène Scribe.

La Muette de Portici (*Masaniello*) not only portrayed history, it *made* history, both musically and otherwise—for its presentation in Brussels in 1830, year of revo-

* *Julie* (1804), *La petite maison* (1804) are the titles of two of them. The last named was hooted off the stage for its lasciviousness.

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lutions, precipitated the outbreak which resulted in the separation of Belgium and Holland. Indeed, its revolutionary background makes up in vividness what it may lack in fidelity. In Scribe's version this Neapolitan revolution of 1647 takes the shape of a mere accident, caused by a stupid mistake (the supposed arrest of Fenella), just as the title of the work and the implied condition of its heroine is an accident. The first is hidden by effective scenery, the other gave rise to a brilliant idea, a real *coup* of rather far-reaching significance. This is the story: There was at the Paris opera no female singer (after Branchu had left) who was thought worthy of standing beside the tenor Nourrit and the soprano Damoreau-Cinti, who were to sing Masaniello and Elvira respectively. But the dancer Noblet had extraordinary powers of mimicry. So Fenella was made a dumb girl. She would speak with her hands and her face instead of her voice, and the orchestra—here is the important point—would illustrate her meaning. Wagner himself records his genuine enthusiasm over this opera: the deduction is obvious.

Masaniello is the name frequently given to this opera, for Masaniello is, next to his sister Fenella, the most heroic character. Fenella, a poor fisher girl, has been betrayed by no less a person than Alfonso, the son of the viceroy of Naples, of whose real identity she is unaware; and she returns his false love with genuine passion. Alfonso is betrothed to Elvira, a Spanish princess. Fenella, who has been arrested, for no particular reason, by Selva, an officer of the viceroy's body-guard, escapes just in time to become unwittingly a witness of Alfonso's marriage ceremony. Her agitation arouses suspicion, and Elvira, whose sympathy had already been aroused for the girl, discovers the truth when Fenella recognizes her faithless lover. She is given her liberty, and, after contemplating suicide, returns to her brother Masaniello at Portici, where the discontented fishermen have gathered about him and Pietro as leaders. Fenella's story, told in gestures, rouses her brother's thirst for vengeance, and, though she has concealed the exact identity of her betrayer, he fans the embers

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of discontent into open revolt. Leaving Fenella in the care of Pietro, he leads the armed fishermen toward Naples. Meantime Elvira, having forgiven her husband, desires to right the wrong he has done Fenella, and Selva is commissioned to find her again and bring her back to the court. While attempting to carry out his orders he is attacked and killed by Masaniello in the marketplace of Naples, whereupon a fight ensues between the soldiers and the people that rally about Masaniello. The people remain victors.

When Act IV opens, the town has been taken; Masaniello, back in his cavern lodging, preaches moderation to the people's delegation led by Pietro. The latter demands 'revenge' and especially the death of Alfonso, who has escaped. Fenella has overheard their conversation in terror, and while her brother and the men are in an adjoining room, Alfonso and Elvira, as fugitives, come to seek shelter. She attempts to shield them, but they are recognized by the returning Pietro and saved from his and his companions' fury only by Masaniello's generosity and valor. They are set free. Masaniello is invested with the dignities of government by a deputation of the Council, which now arrives. But Pietro wreaks vengeance upon Masaniello for his 'treason' by giving him poison, which, however, renders him insane instead of killing him. In the last act Pietro and the fisherfolk are enjoying the luxuries of the royal palace when word arrives that an army approaches, while an eruption of Vesuvius in the distance adds new terrors. The people call for Masaniello to save them. He appears, insane, but in a moment of lucidity starts off to fight at their head. Soon after, Alfonso enters, victorious, reports the death of the hero, whom he has been unable to save. Fenella, seeing Alfonso and Elvira together, conquers her jealousy, joins their hands and leaps to her death from the terrace of the palace.

The music of *Masaniello* is a thoroughly practical, effective and yet sincerely conceived setting of the drama. Its texture and form follow the action closely, intermingling solos, ensembles and choruses, often combining all three, as the situation demands. There is comparatively little recitative, and that little is rather naked in outline. The rest is mostly pleasing melody, of chaste contour like that of the comic opera, with

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few coloratura embellishments. The most expressive element is the orchestral accompaniment—which develops a peculiarly eloquent style in the pantomimic passages, a style that was bound to react upon the stage itself.

All in all we cannot call this music more than a brilliant mediocrity, lighted up here and there by flashes of true inspiration. Auber was not a great composer. He did not possess the genius of a Rossini for graceful melody, or that of a Weber for harmonic eloquence, yet he had something of both: his melodic style is agreeable and his harmonies interesting, with strong progressions and rich dissonances. Trained in the school of *opéra comique*, he gives us its piquant and popular rhythms and compactness of form, and also some of its banality. Yet withal there is much more sincerity in his work than in that of most of his grand opera confrères—of all he is to us the most sympathetic figure. And we can never forget the happy moments that we owe him as the composer of *Fra Diavolo* and the rest of that merry company.

We cannot point out arias or other single pieces that have remained popular—except the overture, still a favorite beside that of *Tell*. But there are passages whose historic significance cannot be overlooked. Take the finales of the first and second acts. The first is the wedding scene, pictured in vivid contrasts of solo and ensemble passages. The chorus off stage (in the church) sings a chorale of thanksgiving. Fenella, outside, acts out a silent drama of grief—accompanied by the orchestra. Could Wagner have had this in mind when he wrote the opening scene in the *Meistersinger*? (It should be noted that when Fenella tells her brother that her faithless lover has married, the theme of this same chorale is used to convey her meaning.) The second finale is the fishermen's uprising. After their agitated call for arms they are warned by Masaniello

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to conceal their feelings, and they march forth singing the merry Barcarolle—a revolution under a mask. As they disappear, the orchestra continues the Barcarolle with dissonant suggestions, minor chromatics, shadings that suggest the sinister significance of the melody unmistakably. Another great ensemble is the vivid scene of the market place, with its excitement, its dances and merriment, suddenly interrupted by the supposed attempt to arrest Fenella; the people's pleading, Masaniello's anger, the call for revenge, that tremendous shout in the full chord of C major and the confused cry for arms; then the prayer of the people with those strangely solemn notes in unison. Note again that in the final scene of the opera, during Fenella's supplication for her brother's safety in the fight, this same prayer of the people for success in battle is used as *leit-motif*. This whole final scene, with the insane Masaniello, is a masterful piece of musical suggestion, the orchestra conjuring up a succession of things experienced in the course of the opera as they flash across his darkened mind. It is in the clever handling of big scenes like these that Auber excelled and paved the way. Of merely musical excellence are the slumber song of Masaniello in Act IV, the melodious *Andantino* of Elvira, inserted, after the manner of the *opéra comique*, in the finale of Act I; the great duet scene of Alfonso and Elvira in Act III (usually omitted), and the ingenious and charming second Barcarolle (Act V).

II

The first opera that Rossini wrote for Paris, *Le Comte d'Ory*, is chiefly noted for the fact that its composer was paid 12,000 francs for the score. But then, 'Tell' brought him the double of that and is otherwise vastly more important.

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The libretto of *Guillaume Tell* was the work of various collaborators, including Rossini himself. The Schiller drama, which forms the basis, was 'arranged' with little respect to its illustrious author. Choruses and ballets were thrown in wherever they would go, some of Schiller's most powerful scenes (such as that of the narrow path where Gessler is slain) were widened—and thereby weakened—in order to make room for the additional characters, and a more or less maudlin love affair with a happy conclusion was inserted as indispensable operatic adjunct. Mathilde, a princess of the house of Hapsburg and sister of Gessler, is in love with Arnold, the son of the Swiss patriot Melchthal; Arnold is torn twixt love and duty, but the putting to death of his father by Gessler makes him a true patriot out of thirst for vengeance. Mathilda, on the other hand, is made to save little Jemmy, Tell's son, out of pure goodness of heart, and after Gessler is killed and nothing stands in the way of her marriage with Arnold, she gives vent to some Swiss sentiments quite remarkable for an Austrian. Such is opera!

The opera is in four acts. The first introduces us to pretty pastoral choruses and scenery, a barcarolle for tenor (Ruodi) and several of the principal characters: Tell, with measured phrases and solemn chords of the added sixth, commensurate with his dignity; Melchthal, with patriarchal rhythms; Arnold with his more lyrical style, a mixture of French and Italian melodiousness. Gessler's proximity is announced by a hunting theme of Weberish cast, and in the following wedding music (a bit of 'decoration' pure and simple) the rhythm of this theme is used as a sort of *leit-motif* to lure Arnold away. More show, a shooting festival (with choruses) in which Jemmy takes the prize, and the obligatory ballet brings the short scene in which Tell saves Leuthold, the fugitive avenger of his daughter's honor, by ferrying him across the lake. The finale

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is built up, in the old manner, out of the people's prayer for safety and the war-like rhythms of their conflict with the pursuing soldiers. Melchthal's defense of Leuthold and his arrest by Rudolph brings on the clash that forms the climax.

Act II is short. It plays on the heights of the Rütli. The chorus of hunters (with the old motive) is contrasted with a peaceful song of the mountaineers in the distance. Mathilde's romance is Italian in contour, with lots of *florituri*, and her love duet with Arnold, immediately following it, is common in its mawkish turns and tasteless in its virtuoso display of single and double runs. The trio between Tell, Walter and Arnold breathes a very different spirit. In it Arnold learns of the death of his father, swears revenge, and with the two patriots plots to throw off the hateful Austrian yoke. It is a curious mixture of chaste melodiousness in Rossini's old manner, of Meyerbeerian forebodings and romantic pathos. The finale which follows is the famous Rütli scene, the meeting of the conspirators of the three cantons. A resolute motive of the horns announces the men of Unterwald; another, more stirring, those of Schwyz; a third, restless with odd accents, those of Uri. Each body in turn is greeted with the same cadential passage. The oath of loyalty to the cause is a rising tide of choral mass effects in true grand opera style. Polyphonic exclamations, an orgy of dotted rhythms, of strong dynamic contrasts, supported by orchestral tremolos, rushing passages of strings—every mechanical effect is employed to produce excitement. The colors are sombre, the harmonic texture varied by the adroit use of secondary sevenths in various inversions, French and German sixths, suspensions and pedals—all the current vocabulary in fact.

Guillaume Tell is a tour de force. It is a complete symposium of all possible agencies of operatic effect:

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virtuoso song, choral song in all styles from prayer to cataclysmic *mêlée*, local color in scenery and music and in dance, tone-painting, orchestral atmosphere and the rage of tempest. They are all represented in Acts III and IV. Mathilde and Arnold sing their 'farewell to hope' in copious roulades, soldiers sing a march-like hymn, Tyrolians sing a chorus to accompany a *pas de trois*; follows a ballet, a soldier's march; then a dramatic scene: Tell refuses to bow to the hat, is arrested, commanded by Gessler to shoot an apple from his son's head, which elicits a rather fine aria with 'cello accompaniment; Tell takes aim (a series of cautious pizzicato notes and wood-wind chromatic seventh chords), the arrow flies (an upward rushing scale of violins), the apple falls—a fortissimo chord of C with choral shouts of victory. More drama: Mathilde saves the child, ensemble of rising hate against Gessler, opposing choruses of people and soldiers; Tell is cast into chains, he curses the tyrant, so does Mathilde, so does everybody (except the soldiers); fortissimo curses in eight to ten-part chorus and five principals, over triplet passages of full orchestra. Curtain. It rises again to discover Arnold still taking farewell, in martial strains, from his ancestral home. He is interrupted by revolted Switzers seeking arms; the scene might well be omitted. Now, on a rocky shore, we hear a chorus of women with Hedwiga (Tell's wife), a notable trio for women's voices and wind accompaniment; then the prayer introducing the storm (orchestral storms were almost operatic dogma) and the finale, Gessler's death at the hands of the escaped Tell, saved by the storm. An apotheosis with a broad theme modulated through all keys with a final '*crescendo*' ends the opera.

In Rossini's career *Tell* signalizes the renunciation of his Italian past, that superficial, light-hearted and charming past which the 'Barber' still brings back to us. In the history of the grand opera it signifies an-

‘ROBERT LE DIABLE’

other step in the development of ultimate effects, the exalting of technique, of mere externals. *Tell* is still graceful as well as grateful, it still has Rossinian charm of melody, mingled with much French éclat, and banality, just as Auber's *Masaniello* had the elegance, aptness and rhythmic grace of the *opéra comique*. Neither of these two men pursued their ‘grand’ ambitions further, and perhaps it is well that they did not. What this cultivation of the musically emphatic, dynamically superlative, scenically magnificent and dramatically unscrupulous was to lead to, we see in the productions of Meyerbeer, a man who ‘possessed the scenic power which Spontini strove for, the seriousness of avocation which Rossini at first did not seek, and out of both created in deliberate and ripe consideration the magnificent edifice of opera that had to include all that was hungry for sensation.’ He knew but one principle: the externally grateful.

III

Meyerbeer arrived in Paris in 1826, at the age of thirty-five. Like Spontini and Rossini and Gluck before him, he had an Italian past. But his German past was or should have been more deeply rooted, for he was born in Berlin, educated in Germany and was a youthful friend and admirer of Weber. But, Jew that he was, his nature was that of the true cosmopolite. His early German operas had no success whatever. After visiting Italy, upon the advice of Salieri, he tried to imitate the style of Rossini, but of his six or more Italian operas only one, *Il crociato in Egitto*, had any vogue. He had, however, with his wonderful power of assimilation, acquired an Italian melodiousness in addition to his German counterpoint. Weber reproached him for his disloyalty to the German school and for six years thereafter he remained silent. But

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while in Paris (he had gone there to stage his *Crociato*) he further expatriated himself by the addition of French rhythm to Italian melody, and, after hearing *Masaniello* and *Tell*, he swore complete allegiance to the French grand opera with *Robert le Diable*. That was in 1831. Its success secured him a place in the hearts of the French people that no man had held since Gluck. It is curious that both these giants of distinctively French opera should be of German origin.

The author of the libretto of *Robert* is the redoubtable Scribe. It is a complicated meshwork of pseudo-romantic and supernatural conceptions, with a quasi-motive of redemption worked through it as a thread of real wool, which Meyerbeer proceeds to cover up with the tinsel of vocal roulades, simple or double, at every turn.

Robert (the disowned duke of Normandy) is not a Devil ('Daredevil' is the meaning of the sobriquet), but merely a sort of mediæval Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, whose mother represents the Jekyll strain and whose father is the Devil incarnate who has seduced her. He has now come back to a kind of Mephistophelian existence in the shape of Bertrand, the supposed friend of Robert, but really his evil genius, whose purpose is to drag him to perdition. Having wooed and won the love of Isabella, the princess of Sicily, Robert under the evil influence has insulted her father and must flee. Nevertheless he returns to win her hand in a tournament, but he is led to gamble with the assembled knights and loses all his wealth and his armor to boot. But Alice, his foster-sister, has followed him to Palermo in company with the troubadour Raimbaud, her brother, and brings the intelligence of his mother's death together with a letter which he is to read 'when he is worthy of it.' Alice pleads for him with Isabella, who forgives and furnishes him with arms. Challenged to a combat of life or death by his rival, the prince of Grenada, he is again led astray by Bertram and fails to appear. Bertram now turns Samiel and (instead of magic bullets) offers a branch of cypress, growing in a deserted convent and haunted by a weird band of spectral nuns. Their evil passions roused by Bertram's will, they arise from their graves

'ROBERT LE DIABLE'

and in an orgiastic ballet scene attempt to seduce Robert, about to pluck the branch. As soon as he does so they are converted into demons, from whose clutches, presumably, only Bertram could rescue him.

Isabella is about to marry the prince of Grenada when Robert appears in her chamber, having, by the power of his branch, put to sleep all her entourage. She appeals to his better nature, and desisting from his purpose to abduct her, he breaks the branch and surrenders his evil power. He is quickly surrounded by his enemies, but once more saved from their vengeance by Bertram.

Act V sees him seeking sanctuary in the church. His adversaries cannot enter, and Alice comes to convey the news that Isabella is his. Bertram, whose earthly term is finished at midnight, makes a supreme effort to win his soul, and offers him a pact (Shades of Mephistopheles!). Alice again presents the letter from the mother, and he is still wavering when midnight strikes and Bertram sinks into the earth amid thunder—and Robert is saved. The finale shows him with Isabella before the altar.

As we have remarked above, *Robert* was Meyerbeer's Paris début. Auber's *Muette de Portici* and Rossini's *Tell* were produced in 1828 and 1829 respectively. These two, combined with the earlier Italian imitation and the still earlier Weber influence, provided the substance for *Robert*. Its success was tremendous. All this noise, show, thrill of dramatic situation were food for Parisian palates—never mind the false psychology, the weak characters, the impossible happenings, the absurdity of it. The music does not save it; it does not try. Effective always, but not true. Robert is sad, but he sings a jolly tune, Isabella suffers but she forgets her pain in runs and trills; Bertram the devil and Alice the good sing a duet together; when both reach a convenient vowel they have a nice bit of coloratura—triplets, skips, broken chords in contrary motion—very difficult. Think of the deafening applause when a Catalani, a Pasta, a Tamburini set off these pyrotechnics; think of the Louis-Philippe audience, the colossal

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opera house, 100,000-franc singers, the brass in the orchestra, the gilt on the stage, the excitement, the pleasure-seeking thousands, the diamonds, the perfume, the grease-paint, the gossip, the wine-woman-and-song atmosphere, and you will understand these operas. A variety show of supreme dimensions, a circus of human wonders. Variety, effect, technique, the manager a virtuoso no less than the singers and the composer. We know no convention, no limit, we must have everything. Solos for all the stars (and they *were* all stars)—not the conventional arias alone—cavatinas, roman-zas, scenas, ballades; duets in various combinations, trios, *a cappella* or accompanied; ensembles with chorus or without, men's choruses, women's choruses, drinking songs, gambling songs, dancing choruses, prayers, Bacchanalia, Sicilienne, *pas de deux*, *pas de cinq*, a waltz in hell, and a ballet of nuns—think of it! It is useless to attempt analysis or even to point out the high-lights; it is one great orgy of effects. Alice's romance in Act III is of ordinary stuff, and the arias of Isabella are celebrated—they still serve ambitious prima donnas as evidence of their skill. As for the opera—it no longer seems worth the incandescent lights.

IV

Les Huguenots, generally regarded as Meyerbeer's greatest opera, was performed in Paris, Feb. 21, 1836. Its libretto, in the usual five acts, is by Scribe and Deschamps. It is a dramatization of the massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572) in Scribe's pretentious manner, interwoven with personal events of sentimental interest.

Raoul de Nangis, a Protestant noble, is at the outset in love with a Catholic lady who, he later discovers, is Valentine, the daughter of the Count de St. Bris, governor of the Louvre. Margaret of Valois, newly wedded to Henry of Navarre (later

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Henri IV), is earnestly concerned in the task of reconciling the two opposing elements, and Raoul is one of those newly introduced into the influential circle of Catholic nobles. He is present at a feast in the house of the Count of Nevers, whose marriage to Valentine has been arranged by her father. She, however, returns the love of Raoul, and on the night of the feast visits her betrothed to obtain his release from the bond concluded without her consent. He generously consents. Raoul, however, recognizing his unknown love, misinterprets the motive of her visit and flees in horror, just as Urbain the page arrives to summon him before the Queen.

Act II shows Raoul swearing fealty to the Queen. To promote her work of reconciliation, Margaret has determined to symbolize it by the wedding of Valentine, now released from her promise to Nevers, to a prominent Huguenot noble; her choice has fallen upon Raoul. Raoul readily consents, until he recognizes in Valentine the lady who has betrayed his love. His refusal nearly precipitates a fight, which is prevented by Margaret.

Valentine, surprised by Raoul's action, again renews her promise to Nevers. Raoul offers satisfaction to her father in the shape of a challenge, delivered by his attendant Marcel. But the friends of his opponent plot to attack him before the duel. Valentine has overheard them and together with Marcel she rallies Protestant soldiers to his protection. The Queen, arriving opportunely at the height of the conflict, restores peace; Nevers leads his betrothed away, and Raoul discovers his mistake about Valentine.

In Act IV he enters Nevers' home to explain all to Valentine. He finds her alone, but when Nevers and St. Bris return he is forced to hide. In his concealment he becomes a witness to the plot of the St. Bartholomew massacre—here represented as an act of vengeance on St. Bris' part. The latter unfolds the plan to the assembled nobles, avowing the King's approval; priests bless the swords and distribute the white scarfs with the red crosses which shall serve as signs of recognition. Nevers alone refuses to murder and breaks his sword. He is arrested and his silence thus secured. Raoul, after all are gone, starts to rouse his party, but is detained by Valentine, who declares her love for him.

In Act V Valentine has followed Raoul; Nevers has released himself and falls fighting; Marcel blesses the union of the two lovers. Finally all fall at the hands of St. Bris and his allies.

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Five years had elapsed since the appearance of *Robert*—five impatient years on the part of the Paris public—when the *Huguenots* burst out in unheard-of glory. On March 1, 1836, Heine, the German poet in exile, wrote: 'Yesterday was an extraordinary day for the *beau monde* of Paris; the first performance of Meyerbeer's long and eagerly expected (*Langersehnten*) *Huguenots* was given at the opera and Rothschild gave his first great ball in his new mansion. * * * It was a wonderful sight, the most fashionable public of Paris, in festive attire, thus gathered in the great opera hall in earnest, almost reverent devotion. * * * The atmosphere of a Parsifal performance in 1900, perhaps. It is doubtful if Wagner ever reached such heights of adulation. One compared Meyerbeer's genius to Goethe's. 'It is not a question of judgment,' says Heine. '*Robert le Diable* had to be heard a dozen times before the whole beauty of that masterwork could be understood. And the critics assure us that in the *Huguenots* Meyerbeer has shown even greater perfection of form, more ingenuity of detail. He is probably the greatest living contrapuntist, the greatest artist in music. * * * Not so absurd, perhaps, when we consider that Wagner had not produced even *Rienzi*, that Weber and Schubert, who should have belonged to this generation, were long since dead. The fact that Schumann, Chopin and Liszt were still in their prime only serves to show what a disproportionate amount of recognition operatic composers have always claimed for themselves.

However, even discounting all contemporary opinion, we must still accord genuine praise to Meyerbeer's creation. In point of musical value it is not five, but fifty years ahead of *Robert*. This astounding feat serves to show the extraordinary power of the Meyerbeer eclecticism. *Robert* was an attempt in the French manner, carefully supported by Italian props. *Les*

**Facsimile of the Poster for the First Production of 'Les Hugue-
nots' at the Paris Grand Opera, 1836, and Stage Setting
of the First Scene of Act V**

(From the Library of the Paris Opera)

ACADEMIE ROYALE DE MUSIQUE

AUJOURD'HUI LUNDI 29 FEVRIER 1836,
LA PREMIERE REPRESENTATION DES
HUCUENOTS

Opéra en 3 actes.

CHANT: M^{re} A. ROBERT, LÉVESQUE, PÉREZ, FÉLIX-PRÉVOST, MARIÉ, DÉRIOT, WATÉL, SÉRIE,
 TRÉVAIL, BERNARD, CHERPENTIER, ALIARD, M^{me} GOSSELIN, DORVILLE, FALCON, FLACHEUX, LAURENT.
 DANSE: M^{me} MAILLARD, MINON, QUÉLIN, DUMPLON, M^{me} MONTAUX, SCHMID, FORTIER, MARIN, BONGY,
 ALBERTINE, FLORENTINE.

Toutes les Entrées de faveur sont suspendues.
 (On commencera à 7 heures précises.)

**Toutes les Places ayant été louées d'avance, les Bureaux ne
 seront pas ouverts.**

Admission gratuite des loges, en vertu de la location de l'Académie Royale de Musique, par George-Bouffé, Hôtel Chénier.
 LE BUREAU DE LOCATION EST OUVERT, TOUS LES JOURS, DE 11 HEURES A 6 HEURES.



‘LES HUGUENOTS’

Huguenots was a conscious work of mastery. He had in the interim mastered the technique of his new medium so completely that he could at one stroke bring it to its ultimate power. It is not too much to say that here he foreshadowed the music drama of the future. His free disposition of materials, following the requirements of the scenes; the handling of the chorus and ensembles in conjunction with and as support of the solo voices; this musical fusion of the scenes into one another; these harmonic ingenuities, successions of sevenths and ninths, chromatic triads; these appoggiaturas and enharmonic changes; these impressive unisons; the occasional reiteration of a theme as leit-motif; this orchestral coloring, characterization of the milieu, and accentuation of the issue,—all these foreshadow Wagner as certainly as Mozart foreshadowed Weber.

Where in *Robert* we could select nothing for remark, we have in ‘The Huguenots’ an embarrassment of riches. Let us take only the high spots. The overture takes the familiar Lutheran chorale, ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God,’ as its theme. It becomes in the opera the motive of the Huguenots, and more especially of Marcel, the gruff moralist and uncompromising religionist, one of the best characterized figures in the opera. Act I has the orgy at Nevers’ house with fine-spirited choruses, Raoul’s romance about his meeting with Valentine (accompanied by the *viola d’amore*), Marcel’s battle song and the famous aria of Urbain, the page, with its graceful melodies and brilliant cadenzas. Here Meyerbeer shows his hand. A dramatist whose first concern is the *spirit* would have made this delivery of a message a mere incident, a recitative—but Meyerbeer cared most about the *effect*. Here was a lyric soprano holding the centre of the stage (perhaps he had a certain one in mind): let’s give him a nice little Italian cavatina—even though he will have to overstep his rôle of messenger and volunteer a few independent,

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quasi-significant remarks. Besides, we want a soprano for our finale—here he is, what a pretty effect—a men's chorus with a brilliant soprano above it, and novel, too—a certain hit for the end of Act I!

Act II is, with Act IV (usually the climax with Meyerbeer), musically the best. The scene with the princess is full of ethereal charm; a light, happy atmosphere. The trio (Margaret, Urbain, and Lady of Honor) is remarkable for its intricate rhythms. There again Meyerbeer, the clever manager of his public, appears: a chorus of bathers—female bathers of course—giving the page an opportunity for a naughty remark or two. How Paris society must have tittered in its *baignoires*! And Raoul, entering, must be blindfolded—another chance for a 'novelty scene' and more pretty music. He is entranced by his environments, he indulges in extravagant proffers of gallantry—and the noble figure of Margaret is converted into a silly, sentimental female for the sake of a duet. Meyerbeer never minds compromising his characters for the sake of an effect. The act ends with a remarkably effective finale—the oath of fealty, Raoul's disdain of Valentine's hand, the anger of the nobles, chorus and principals all signifying their various sentiments altogether in one well kept rhythm, in the approved operatic manner. What a magnificent confusion a Wagner could have made of that scene!

Act III is a succession of chorus effects, an endless variety from Master Meyerbeer's novelty shop: Chorus of promenaders to tell us it is Sunday (don't smile!), chorus of soldiers (an effective solo with male ensemble and chorus sung by Bois-Rosé); litany, gypsy song, gypsy dance—a little drama, more chorus (evening bells); then a foolish duet between Margaret and Marcel, important business transacted in the night time to double coloratura! Then the septet, including the beautiful E major movement, and the taking of positions for the duel; then more chorus—chorus of de-

MEYERBEER: 'LE PROPHÈTE'

rision—then (after the appearance of Margaret and Valentine) the wedding-train—more chorus and ballet. Margaret's oil on the troubled waters gives occasion for more chorus—everybody this time—we can *all* do *her* homage. Curtain.

Act IV falls easily into two parts: the conspiracy of Catholic nobles, an extremely powerful situation, masterfully executed, and the scene between Raoul and Valentine, surely one of the great love duets of all opera. The G minor cavatina (following Valentine's declaration) Dr. Bie calls the only place in Meyerbeer's works where he feels from within, touches the heart.

- For his music is not the language of intimate emotions but of sensual effects. It does not reveal, it only underscores. Act V is the noise and confusion of St. Bartholomew's night—gruesome, effective and in places touching.

V

Le Prophète illustrates a historical crisis as did its predecessor; indeed, the similarity of the two subjects would indicate that its authors desired to duplicate a success.

The 'Prophet,' the hero of the opera, is the historical John of Leyden, the innkeeper, leader of the sect of Anabaptists, revolutionaries and religious fanatics. He is in love and intending to marry Bertha, a village maiden, who, however, is unable to get the consent of the Count of Oberthal, her liege lord, to the marriage, because the count desires her for himself. Bertha flees and takes refuge with John, but he is compelled to give her up in order to save his mother, Fidès, whom Oberthal threatens to put to death. The Anabaptist leaders pretend to see in him the promised prophet, and in his rage John yields to their importunities and leaves his mother to lead the army of revolt. The Anabaptists finally capture Münster, and in the cathedral crown John their king. Fidès, who has come to Münster in search of her son, believing him to be a victim of the false prophet, recognizes him in the per-

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son of the new king, and during the ceremony accosts him as her son. He repudiates her, fearing to compromise his power over the crowd by acknowledging human relations. Tricked by her son into confessing that her claim is false, Fidès is taken off to the dungeon of the castle. John visits her there, and, promising to renounce his false ambitions, he obtains her pardon. Meantime, Bertha, who has followed Fidès to Münster in the disguise of a pilgrim and who has been recognized by Fidès earlier in the day, is seeking to avenge the loss of her lover upon the prophet. She finds Fidès and John in the dungeon, where she is about to commit arson. When she learns that he himself is the bloodthirsty tyrant she abandons him. Thereupon, learning that the Anabaptist leaders are about to sacrifice him to the imperial powers to save their own necks, John contrives to blow up the palace during the coronation festivities, destroying both himself and his enemies. The faithful Fidès rushes in at the lost moment to die by his side.

Musically *Le Prophète* is as inferior to the 'Huguenots' as the libretto is inferior to that of the former work. Its intentional irony in itself is a fraud, and the music is as false as the prophet himself. All the earnest religious fervor of the Huguenots is converted into a stupid fanaticism with a sordid foundation. John, in Scribe's version, is a vindictive scoundrel and his Anabaptists are marauding peasant-outlaws, bloodthirsty rascals, whose invocations of the deity are empty lies. John's character is supposed to have a sterling side, but a character who first abandons his sweetheart to save his mother and then abandons his mother to avenge his sweetheart, does not appeal to our sympathies. Even Fidès, the one fine character of the work, does nothing true. Her scenes with Bertha are simpering, tasteless, or artificial; her own virtuoso arias have no dramatic force and her finale duet with John is of the approved Italian variety. John's dream in Act II is the best piece of the opera, and his hymn with harp accompaniment at the end of Act III has a noble melody. The ensembles are weak and often

MEYERBEER: 'L'AFRICAIN'

banal, the quartet of John and the Anabaptists trying to convert him, and the trio of the Anabaptists and Oberthal (in disguise) in Act III fail of their purpose. The Coronation march at the beginning of Act IV is one of the familiar pieces of the mediocre orchestral repertoire. It begins well—strong rhythm and contour—but peters out into saccharine banalities. The usual 'novelty acts' are here again,—this time they are a peasant dance with a pretty quick-waltz movement, a chorus and ballet of skaters (on the frozen lake near the Anabaptist camp before Münster), a purely gratuitous interpolation, and a Bacchanalia and drinking scene with an explosion as climax. The variety forms are increased by a 'Pastorale' (Johann) and a 'Song.' In other ways, too, Meyerbeer broke through tradition, unusual rhythms, combination of motives, the anticipation of the march motive are in themselves significant signs of progress. The use of the 'Preaching' theme as the Anabaptist motive is in the 'Huguenots' manner, but, alas, its musical value is far below that of the old chorale melody. Fortunately Meyerbeer has not made it into an overture—he dispenses with that altogether.

Le Prophète was brought out in 1849—thirteen years of partial leisure had not sharpened Meyerbeer's tools. The intervals between operas became longer and longer. The next one appeared in 1864, after Meyerbeer's death. He had begun it back in the thirties and labored over it till the end. Indeed, *L'Africain* represents the greatest effort of Meyerbeer's career. As a stage work it is representative of the grand historical genre—it embodies its greatest virtues as well as its most common vices, showiness, bigness for the sake of effect alone, inconsistency, incongruity, and false realism. Scribe's utter disregard for historical truth, when desirous for a situation or a grandiose stage picture, cries out of every page of the libretto, and the modern listener must resign himself to such things as an Afri-

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can queen from India singing eloquent French in the approved Italian style.

Vasco de Gama, the explorer, is the hero. The lover of Ines, daughter of Don Diego, Portuguese admiral, and beloved by her, he is at the beginning of the opera given up for lost upon the high seas, having accompanied Diaz upon a perilous expedition. Don Pedro, president of the Grand Council, has in the meantime, by royal command and paternal consent, obtained the hand of the unfortunate Ines, who learns from Don Pedro the news of the expedition's wreck and her lover's death. The latter is contradicted by the appearance of Vasco in person, and who is now fired by a great ambition; to succeed where Diaz failed, gain an empire for his king and immortality for himself. He pleads before the Council for ships and aid, and, though he presents two dusky captives—Selinka ('L'Africaine'), herself a queen, and Nebusco (her lover)—he is refused. He defies the Council and is thrown into prison, and through the jealous Don Pedro condemned to death.

In prison Vasco is attended by Selinka, deeply enamored of him, who, to her great dismay, now learns of his love for Ines. Ines, in order to save his life, has consented to become Don Pedro's wife. It is she, indeed, who brings the pardon and the awful intelligence to him. To allay her jealousy of the African queen, Vasco, with characteristic dash, presents the two captives to his lost love. But he has learned from Selinka the true course to the coveted land, and, nearer his life's goal than ever before, he fits out a fresh cruise at his own expense.

Near the coast of Africa he overtakes Don Pedro, who has obtained the commission sought by his rival. Knowing Ines to be aboard, he generously undertakes to warn Don Pedro of the course which Nebusco (now in Pedro's confidence as steersman, but treacherously bent upon revenge) is steering. He is, by way of thanks, tied to the mast, about to be shot, when a typhoon breaks loose and wrecks the vessel on the coast of Selinka's kingdom.

Queen once more, Selinka saves only Vasco and Ines from the vengeance of the natives. Vasco suddenly conceives a passion for the African and is quickly wedded to her by Brahmin rites, leaving Nebusco disconsolate. The reappearance of Ines brings forth complications. Selinka, realizing where Vasco's true love lies, generously abandons him to her

'L'AFRICAIN'; 'DINORAH'

white rival, speeds both homeward and herself seeks death by the fumes of the deadly Manzanillo tree.

Musically, *L'Africaine* is unquestionably Meyerbeer's finest work. But it cannot rank with *Les Huguenots* for dramatic coherence; its plot militates against its frequent performance nowadays. But it is interesting to read through the score and realize the mighty strides taken forward since the days of *Robert le Diable*. In harmonic sonority and variety of color, in nobility of melodic contour, in orchestral technique, in everything that interests the progressive musician Meyerbeer has advanced. His orchestra no longer acts merely as accompaniment to the voices, but as accompaniment to the whole *milieu*, as indicator of the mood. All the more remarkable therefore are the frequent lapses into the worst Italianism of his early career. He never would abandon absurd passagework, senseless as regards musical structure and ruinous to the dramatic purpose.

L'Africaine is remarkable for its broadly conceived cantilena melodies. Wonderfully effective monodies, 'suspended in mid-air,' such as the beautifully haunting farewell cry of Ines toward the end of the opera—are really capable of thrilling a modern listener. Vasco's apostrophe to India, the storm ballad (Act III) of Nebusco, the great duet between Vasco and Selinka and that between Ines and Selinka are notable for original turns, and the death scene of Selinka (under the Manzanillo tree) is more or less justly celebrated. All in all, *L'Africaine* is worthy of study. Here we take farewell—though a lingering one—of old Italy, the Italy of Rossini—and glimpse the Milan of Verdi, as we have already felt the forebodings of a power yet mightier—the hand of Richard Wagner.

For the sake of completeness, Meyerbeer's 'comic' opera, *Le Pardon de Ploërmel* (*Dinorah*), should be re-

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corded here. The text is by Barbier and Carré and in its absurdity it rivals some of the worst opera texts that have been written.

Hoël, a goatherd, is with his sweetheart on the way to chapel when a thunderstorm breaks loose and destroys the house and farm of Dinorah's father. Fearing poverty, Hoël decides to reclaim a treasure of which he has learned from Tonik, the village magician. But first he must undergo a year's probation in a lonely cavern. Dinorah believes herself abandoned and becomes insane. After the year is up, Hoël returns and selects the cowardly piper, Corentin, as his assistant in lifting the treasure, for, since he who first touches it must die, he can not risk it alone. Here the action begins. Both the searchers meet Dinorah wandering about in the wilderness with her goat. A storm breaks and destroys the sluice which Dinorah is crossing. Through its fall she regains her reason and—Hoël thinks again and abandons his plan.

Musically *Dinorah* is hardly worthy of comment. The most celebrated piece among the surviving wreckage is the 'Shadow Waltz' of the demented heroine, remarkable for its passage work, insane enough in one sense, but requiring the utmost concentration and skill for its execution.

VI

One more opera should be recorded to round out the triumphal course of the 'Grand' genre: Halévy's *Juive*, produced in 1835—between *Robert* and *Les Huguenots*. Halévy, according to Dr. Bie, represents the 'sacrifice of a fine, tender heart to the world of fashion.' His predisposition was evidently for a lighter vein—in *opéra comique* he would have figured brilliantly. But he had the 'grand' persuasion and in the company of Rossini and Meyerbeer he fades, is 'weaker, narrower and paler.' He leans to graceful, soulful melody, and wants to achieve big effects, but he has neither the melodic wealth of Rossini nor the stupendous technique

HALÉVY'S 'LA JUIVE'

of Meyerbeer. Withal he keeps completely to the 'fashion'—the type;—he has all its features, its show and glitter, its conventionalized situations, its staginess, its ballets, and all its artistic crimes.

To make matters worse, the libretto that Scribe worked off on Halévy was the worst of many bad ones—a piece of 'pure psychological cruelty.' Religious intolerance and hatred are its base; its historical background, the Council of Constance in 1440. The Jew, Eleazar, has reared as a Jewess Recha, his foster-daughter, of whom Prince Leopold of Austria is deeply enamored and whom he woos in Jewish guise (in the character of Samuel, the painter), although as Prince he is betrothed to the Princess Eudoxia. Returning from the Hussite war a day earlier than expected by the emperor in order to meet Recha *incognito*, he saves her from a mob threatening her and her father for having broken the Christian Sabbath. His power over the soldiers astounds Recha. At the beginning of Act II her suspicion is further aroused by Leopold's throwing away the sacred cake at the Easter festival in her father's house. She demands an explanation and learns later that Leopold is a Christian. She consents to elope but their plans are frustrated by Eleazar's return. In Act III the festival in honor of Prince Leopold's return is in progress; Eleazar and Recha are present to deliver a diamond chain which the Princess Eudoxia has bought from them for Leopold. As the Princess decorates Leopold with it Recha recognizes him, breaks out in a fury and accuses him of consorting with a Jewess (herself). As a result, Cardinal Brogni, president of the Council, denounces both and Eleazar as well, and orders their imprisonment.

In Act IV the Princess begs Recha to deny her accusations and Brogni attempts to change her faith, both in vain. But Brogni suspects that Recha is not what she appears. Eleazar, moreover, cryptically confides that Brogni's own daughter, supposed to have perished long ago, was saved by a Jew. Not until Recha, in expiation of her supposed crime, has found death in a cauldron of boiling oil, does her cruel foster-father, about to follow her, reveal the fact that she herself is the daughter of Brogni—now a victim of eternal tortures.

Nothing more cruel could well be devised than this revolting dénouement, especially as there is no real rea-

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son for it. For Leopold and Recha, being really Christians, might and should have been married. But terrible tragedies were as much a necessity to the Grand Opera as happy endings were to an earlier type.

A long overture of symphonic architecture and Cherubini *tournaire*, but not highly distinguished, precedes the opera, containing much that is musicianly (sometimes when it shouldn't be), some things that are touching, and very little that is really powerful or genuinely pathetic. Leopold's Serenade (Act I), the drinking songs and waltzes, and the ballets belong to the first category; Recha's Romanza to the second. May the rest remain covered with the charitable mantle of silence. Almost simultaneous with his one great success in grand opera came Halévy's comic masterpiece, *L'Éclair*, of which we shall speak elsewhere.

Halévy composed on and on, operas—grand and comic—by the score. Let us mention among the 'grand' ones only *La reine de Chypre* (1841), Charles VI (1843), and *La Tempesta* (1850). As late as 1852 came the *Juif errant*, after which he achieved nothing more. It was too late for these efforts in a failing style—Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman' was already finished.

Its next triumph the Grand Opera scored, not in Paris, but in Dresden, Germany. Wagner's *Rienzi* was the last and the greatest of its kind (see pp. 262 ff.). But it was little more than a Grand Opera of the Meyerbeer type. It was the climax and the end of the genre, for its author himself set the seal upon the coffin of an art-form that had lived itself out; had burst like a bubble, excessively inflated. A bubble it was and its fragments have very nearly evaporated.

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VII

Berlioz belongs here only because he would be more incongruous anywhere else. At times he smacks of the Paris Opéra, of which indeed he was a constant habitué. He is a great technician and as fond of 'effect' as Meyerbeer, but his method is indirect and he is not inherently 'stagey.' His inspirations are epic and his musical nature symphonic, like Beethoven's. His intellect is stronger than his feelings and in trying to fit his ideas into a dramatic formula he does violence to his imagination. Where Beethoven, by dint of the same sort of genius, created emotional characters, Berlioz gives us figures that do not live, with whom we cannot feel. He had the artistic conscience that Meyerbeer lacks; hence he failed where Meyerbeer succeeded.

His failure is most patent in all the solo passages. His singers do not live. In choruses, ensembles, in mass effects in general, he is more at home. Only in the orchestra is he really successful. He can paint a scene, an atmosphere, a cataclysm, with his orchestra; we feel that he would prefer to have his orchestra speak for his characters and let them remain mute. In *Benvenuto Cellini*, in 'The Trojans,' he has pantomimes where the orchestra does it all. Here is his language, the language he speaks in his symphonic works, that we can understand. But through it all we are conscious of a Titanic power, a turbulent spiritual force that has not found its deliverance. Berlioz was a man between ages; his molds were old but his matter new. His models were Gluck and Spontini (both of whom he does not tire of admiring) but his materials were of the age of Wagner.

Berlioz's operas are these: *Benvenuto Cellini* (1835-37); *Beatrice et Bénédict* (1862); *Les Troyens* (1858-

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63). The first was based on the famous autobiography that was his favorite book; the text was prepared for him by Barbier and de Vailly. The second derives from Shakespeare's 'Much Ado about Nothing,' and reminds us of his great admiration for the Bard of Avon. The text was by himself. The third is in two parts, *La Prise de Troie* (Acts I and II) and *Les Troyens à Carthage* (Acts III, IV and V), based on Homer and Virgil respectively. Thus all of Berlioz's operas are in the nature of literary homages. But, as Bie says, his literary *niveau* was a cultural one, it was not creatively fertile. It is all 'good literary music' by a man who properly wrote neither for the voice nor the stage, and whose inspiration was of the head rather than the heart.

Benvenuto Cellini is a picture of Renaissance Rome during the carnival, painted in gay and brilliant colors. The chief incident is the casting of the great sculptor's mighty statue of Perseus, a work which wins for him the hand of the fair Teresa. In good old Grand Opera fashion there is an 'oath scene.' 'An oath there must be, hence let us swear to cast the Perseus to-day,' comments a facetious critic. The whole work is more 'typical' than Berlioz's other operas, the most practical perhaps but the least distinguished. In 1853 the composer, one of the big international figures of his time, conducted it at Covent Garden, London.

'Beatrice and Benedict,' too, found a foreign home: it was given at Baden, in 1863, during Berlioz's German travels, of which he writes so entertainingly. The prevailing tone of the work is not the sparkling humor of Shakespeare, but 'a romantic charm that passes even to melancholy.' There is a famous *Notturmo* of the two women, as they disappear in the rose-scented, moon-lit night; there is a charming *Sicilienne* of Beatrice, and a wedding train which is a humorously exaggerated double fugue, with a laughing and a weep-

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ing theme—all 'vocal symphonies,' as Dr. Bie calls them.

'The Trojans' is of a different cast. Berlioz intended it to be his masterpiece. And to this day the first part has not been given in his own Paris (except in concert form). In 1890 it was produced in German at Karlsruhe. The second part had its première at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863, only to be 'driven from the stage after a short run,' to quote Mr. Hadow. '*Eh bien, les voilà qui viennent,*' said a friend to the composer, to cheer him, pointing at the arriving audience. '*Oui, ils viennent,*' he answered, '*mais, moi je m'en vais.*' He 'departed' in 1869, and the intervening years brought little besides sickness.

In *La Prise de Troie* the action centres about the sad figure of the virgin Cassandra, who has warned the Trojans not to drag the Wooden Horse into their city. They persist, in accordance with the Homeric epic, and the result is set forth in a scene of 'indescribable carnage and terror.' Old Æneas, having been forewarned by the ghost of Hector, escapes, but the other Trojans fall under the blows of Greek swords, while Cassandra and the women, sheltered in the temple of Cybele, prefer death at their own hands to Greek captivity.

Les Troyens à Carthage follows the story of the Æneid closely. In it 'Æneas' appearance at Carthage, the love of Dido, the summons of Mercury, Æneas' departure and the passion and death of Dido are depicted in a series of scenes of such picturesqueness and power, such languor and pathos, as surely cannot be matched outside the finest pages of Wagner.' This is the praise that Mr. Streatfeild accords to the work. It is justified in a sense, but whether his recommendation of a revival should be seconded is a moot point. The fact that it has not tempted a single opera manager so far certainly has its reasons. It is not 'opera.' In speaking of the second act Bie says that it is 'only

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a symphonic scene of unheard-of pictorial power, of exalted outline, bold in musical landscape, * * * perhaps the most interesting piece in all Berlioz's operas, because it is not opera.'

It is the irony of fate that the one opera of Berlioz that has met with any sort of international success was not intended as an opera at all by its composer. 'The Damnation of Faust,' a 'dramatic legend,' is more in reality an oratorio and as such has been treated in Volume VI.

Throughout his dramatic writings Berlioz remains the symphonist. His orchestra is amazing. Every bar deserves a commentary. The brasses are used with their scales complete; Berlioz demands all that the new valve instruments are capable of. He welcomes the saxophones with gusto. He divides the strings in all their registers. He demands virtuosity from the drummers. Muted horns, cellos, divided basses and trombones accompany the ghost of Hector, and in the last act of the 'Trojans' he has high wood-winds, muted strings and harp to create an ethereal color. Here Berlioz is truly great. Let us worship him for what he is: the supreme genius of the modern orchestra, a master of tonal colors and values—but not a musical dramatist.

CHAPTER VII

THE GERMAN ROMANTIC OPERA

The romantic movement in opera; Weber and the opera—*Freischütz*—*Euryanthe*—'Oberon'—Julius Spohr: *Faust*; *Jessonda*—Heinrich Marschner: *Der Vampyr*—*Templer und Jüdin*; Hans Heiling.

I

It is difficult to keep musical history apart from specifically operatic history at times. Generally, opera goes its merry way, drawing upon the current resources of music and literature. But at certain crucial periods the dramatic demands surpass the existing means and the opera is forced to widen the scope of musical language in order to fulfill its own desires. So it was with Monteverdi, who created the orchestra as an incident to his operatic activity; so it was with Gluck, who broadened melodic and harmonic expression to accomplish his dramatic purpose. With these things musical history is too much concerned to forego dwelling upon them. In the romantic opera not only musical history, but the history of literature and politics is concerned. The whole Romantic Movement, of which the development of opera is a part, is bound up with itself in such a way that a separate treatment of its different manifestations is almost impossible; for its more general aspects we must therefore refer the reader to chapter VI of Vol. II (pp. 213 ff., more specifically pp. 230-239) and again to chapter X of the same volume (pp. 372 ff.).

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Without the existence of such poets as Goethe (as the author of *Werther* and the popular lyrics), Rückert, Müller, Körner, and Heine, such folklorists as the Grimms, such dramatists and philosophers as the Schlegels and Tieck (translators of Shakespeare) and Fichte, the Romantic Movement would be unthinkable. For they awakened the national consciousness to the romantic elements that lay close at hand and in the people's own breasts, and they started the reaction against the cold formalism and artificiality of the classic period. Again, without the Revolution, the Napoleonic Occupation, and the Wars of Liberation, the national spirit could not have been brought to a clear consciousness of itself. Thus the national and idealistic aspects were emphasized. A reaction against things foreign was inevitable; the virtue of the native, local product, the folk-element in literature and art, was exalted.

Now folklore dives into the very soul of romance. It is of the most unbridled imaginativeness, the supernatural is its favorite pasture. And so Romantic music (and, more specifically, Romantic opera) concerns itself preferably with the supernatural. The creed of the Romantic School was that beauty must square with truth, that the content should dominate the form—hence Romantic opera had to seek new and more plastic forms to make clear its meanings. Patriotism, loyalty, brotherly virtues and national liberty were the very life of the Romantic period, hence Romantic opera became essentially German; folk-song, the songs dear to the hearts of the people, became one of its ingredients, as it had been one of the *singspiel*, and the whole music in its typical aspects took its flavor from that. The characters, in place of classic heroes, were the inhabitants of fairyland, of the home fairyland preferably, of mediæval chivalry (long the source of subjects of popular lore), and they hobnobbed with the common

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folk as these were made to hobnob with their princes and nobles. And the atmosphere was that of the woodland, the great outdoors of Germany, the dark recesses of the mountains of Bohemia or the Schwarzwald, the lovely German greenwood that its people love.

Now the Romantic Movement took itself very seriously, and Romantic opera had to do with serious things. But since it held itself dear to the people's heart, it naturally took its departure from the popular singspiel. *Freischütz* is a singspiel in that it employs dialogue, but its really dramatic moments are carried by so-called 'scenes' (the Italian *scena*), consisting of highly colored accompanied recitatives which rise to extraordinary dramatic power. In Weber's *Euryanthe* and Spohr's *Jessonda* the spoken dialogue gives way to a musical one and the true German *durchkomponierte* opera was born. Not since the days of Keiser had this been attempted. Already in *Freischütz*, moreover, Weber had accomplished a sort of fusion of the *scena* with the aria, whereby the form became more musically plastic and lost much of its conventional stiffness. This arioso recitative, with an eloquent orchestral background, signalizes the real transition from the old operatic style to that of the Wagnerian music drama. All in all it is quite true that the Romantic Movement has had more influence upon the course of nineteenth century dramatic music than any other agent.

But the very essence of Romantic Opera is its music. Of all its elements none is so distinctive as that, and in that it differs from all contemporary schools. 'Neither cleverness nor effect are its virtues; it is pure, beautiful music, the music that sings in the soul, without much art or school, the music of which the artist is full day and night, that he hears out of the joys and sorrows of his life and would like to hear into the joys and sorrows of his stage. . . . He is a German, . . . devoted alone to the fancies of his musical dreams and

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the truth of musical expression. . . . He needs his stage to make his dreams come true. That is the nature of all Romantic opera.' *

II

Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) is quite justly celebrated as the founder of Romantic Opera. For even though Spohr's *Faust* was written in 1813 and produced in 1818 and *Freischütz*, 'the truest prototype as well as the highest ornament of the school,' not until 1821, Weber had long been occupied with the creation of truly Romantic opera. In 1806 he wrote his *Rübezahl*, the dramatization of a favorite popular legend, for the Breslau opera, but it was never performed. Its music, romantic beyond controversy, was never completed, and the overture, revised, became that to *Der Beherrscher der Geister*. As such it is still eligible for concert performance. Earlier than this he had written another opera, *Die Macht der Liebe und des Weins* (1799), which remained unheard, and the manuscript of which was destroyed; and *Das Waldmädchen* (later produced in Chemnitz, Vienna, Prague, etc.) whose text he used again in *Silvana*.

Till 1813 Weber lived a nomadic life. In that year he became conductor of the National Theatre in Prague and three years later he was called to Dresden to organize the German opera. But the Italian opera (under Morlacchi) was still considered the official one, and a German opera, *Die drei Pintos*, which Weber wanted to dedicate to the king, was rejected in advance. His other operas were ordered by other cities, too: *Freischütz* by Berlin, *Euryanthe* by Vienna, *Oberon* by London. In London he died. Already during his early stay in Stuttgart (which terminated in 1810) Weber had written a more extensive opera, *Silvana*,

* Oskar Ble: *op. cit.*

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produced with considerable success in Frankfurt (1810), and later, with some additions, in Berlin. In its original form it has been recast by Ferdinand Langer. It is, according to Bie, somewhat in the genre of Boieldieu's 'Little Red Riding Hood' text, and anticipates Auber's *Muette de Portici* in that the Maid of the Forest acts speechless. *Abu Hassan* came next, being performed in Munich in 1811. Its story is that of a couple, Hassan and Fatima, who pretend to be dead in order to stave off their creditors' demands. Their master, the Sultan, and his wife are finally moved to pity, and all ends happily. The music, 'a piece of the daintiest filigree work imaginable,' has managed to keep the work alive till now. It is still occasionally heard in Germany.

Die drei Pintos, which was never completed, is not unlike its exotic predecessor. It has a finale built on a motif of intoxication, a remarkably modern trio, a Seguidilla on a real Spanish melody, a duet aptly characterizing Don Pantaleone and the Grandezza, and a crowd of melodious details. Gustav Mahler used these fragments and other pieces of Weber to construct a good operatic comedy, with the text revised by Weber's son. There remains to be mentioned, in this prelude to Weber's greatest works, the music to *Preciosa*, a contemporary play by one Wolff. There are, besides, the well-known overture (like most of Weber's overtures a masterpiece), a woodland chorus, and some fine incidental music, partly heroic, partly in charming dance rhythms,—also not free from French influence.

But of that influence there is hardly a trace in *Freischütz*. *Freischütz* was first produced in Berlin, June 18, 1821. Some years before that (1817) Weber had married the opera singer Caroline Brand, and his name had been made famous throughout Germany by the publication of his settings of Körner's *Leyer und Schwert* songs. But the history of this period is, as we

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have said, musical history and has been treated as such. Here we may confine ourselves to an analysis of the works themselves.

III

It is difficult for a German to speak dispassionately of a thing so near to his heart as *Der Freischütz*. If he be a man of culture he will think of it as the symbol of the awakening of German national ideals, the beginning of a truly national art rooted in the soil of metaphysical romanticism; if he be a man of the people it will at once conjure up in him folk-tunes of a rare though simple power, and by association awaken memories of his youth and his native land with its forests, its hills and its atmosphere of sweet yet vigorous sentiment. Patriotism to the German is not a cult, but a personal experience—like romantic love he does not feel it until it touches him personally. You may vaunt his country's prowess, its material or intellectual advantages and his bosom will swell with pride, but hum to him the melancholy strains of a favorite folk-song and his cup runneth over. Now if ever there was a folk-opera, *Der Freischütz* corresponds to that designation. Not because of its somewhat far-fetched political significance or its nationalistic history, not because its authors actually drew upon folk-lore and folk-song for their material. All that has been largely forgotten. But because, being so genuinely inspired in the national vein, so spontaneous in its expression of the German folk-spirit, it has sunk so deeply into the consciousness of its people, that every one of its lyrical numbers has become a folk-song just as Silcher's *Loreley* and Schubert's *Lindenbaum* have become folk-songs. It would be conceivable, except for the fact that the general education of the people has perhaps permanently advanced beyond such states of igno-

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rance, that this opera might be known (and loved more than ever) long after the composer's name was forgotten.

We need not recite the plot of *Der Freischütz* here, since it has been fully stated in the Narrative History (vol. II, p. 376), but may remind the reader that Weber himself picked the story from a popular book of fairy-stories by Apel (one of these curious cases of inspiration drawn from mediocre sources), and suggested it for treatment to the then much respected poet Kind, one of Weber's literary circle ("*Der Dichtertee*") at the little Dresden suburb. The action of the piece may be briefly epitomized as follows:

Act I paints the environment, explains the situation and exposes the characters of the male personages. The scene is before the inn. Kilian, the farmer, has won the shooting prize; the country folk's characteristic pride is their efficiency in the huntsmen's art (marksmanship has ever been a favorite trial of masculine ability with Germans), and the chagrin of Max, the ranger, over his defeat at his own game, are pictured at the opening. His fear of failure in the test of the morrow, which concerns his life's happiness and that of his betrothed; Cuno's (the prince's hereditary forester and Max's prospective father-in-law) kindly firmness and professional pride, and the wickedness of Caspar, Max's older colleague and defeated rival for the hand of Agathe, are all brought out in the first trio with chorus; Caspar's profligacy being further reflected in the song with which he seeks to divert his colleague and victim. Samiel, the devil incarnate, too, is introduced to us with his sinister *leit-motif*.

Act II, laid in the forester's house, reveals the temperaments of the two women: Agathe the serious, nobly sentimental, of superstitious piety; Annchen, the charming, light-hearted, archly coquettish but loyal and solicitous. The bad omen of the fallen picture, the visit to the hermit and the blessed roses are incidents of the scene; the love of Agathe and Max, her fears, his desperation, are made clear, the fear-some night of Wolf's Glen presaged. The Finale brings it with terrible reality; the die is cast—in the shape of the cursed bullets with their unholy power.

Act III. The storm has cleared but left dread in our hearts.

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Agathe's fears are heightened; she is adorned for the wedding, 'Beauteous green maiden wreath' her bridesmaids sing. More bad omens: a funeral wreath! But ah, 'the hermit's roses—wind *those* for me.' Transformation. Prince Ottokar has seen Max's mastershots but remains doubtful. He asks him to shoot at the passing dove, Agathe appears, falls, and Caspar falls, too. Samiel and the hermit, the good and the evil, are in final struggle. Agathe lives, Max is saved—general rejoicing.

Very simple, we think to-day. And so, no doubt, thought Weber. He intended nothing else. He was neither reformer nor iconoclast. Both he and Kind had had vague dreams of a unified art work, but no concrete theories. But well may he have suspected that he created something more than an ordinary *singspiel*. In point of fact, he had created the German Romantic Opera, as Schubert had created the Romantic Song—two art species of equal importance. Neither had theorized about it, but both were such prodigious geniuses that, swept by the powerful currents of their time, they were able to conquer realms yet unexplored, and, as if by intuition, to master their language. Thus we see Weber, the eminently absolute musician, develop a dramatic articulation of a power hitherto unknown, sum up at a stroke the achievements of Gluck and of Mozart, sweep aside the inanities to which composers were still slaves, and, gloriously giving voice to the freshly loosened tongues of that most wonderful creation of the human mind—the orchestra,—enunciate for the first time a truly subjective mode of expression,—create vibrations that touched the nation's heart of hearts. He it is that opened the floodgates of romanticism and of national feeling in art, and there came forth that torrential stream which carried in its wake the 'music of the future,' the music drama of Richard Wagner.

Wagner himself has freely acknowledged his debt,

Handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and clefs. The manuscript is written in a cursive style, typical of 18th or 19th-century musical notation. The score is organized into systems, with each staff containing a line of music. The notation is dense and covers the entire page.

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as had Berlioz before him, but to realize the significance of these avowals we must listen to *Freischütz* with a discriminating ear. All the color of the orchestral palette, of woodwinds and brass against, or as ingenious admixture to, the strings, all the subtle combinations of individual shades, the poignant effects of solo instruments, the subtle staccato notes of the horn, the magic of muted violins, divided—all these devices of Berlioz and of Wagner are here, in embryo at least. But more: the *leit-motif*, that much-vaunted invention of programmists,—here it is with all its significance, unheralded, as a natural resource of an intensely musical musician. You want instances? They are almost too palpable: First, there is 'Samiel,' that wonderful diminished seventh in low strings tremolo, all pianissimo, supported by clarinets sustained and sometimes the bassoon—with those three mysterious taps on low A (basses pizzicato, soft staccato of the kettledrums). Each time that Samiel appears we hear it—first in Act I, during Max's desperate soliloquy, then in the Wolf's Glen scene (with oboe instead of bassoon), and finally, when the black huntsman comes to claim his victim, Caspar. The famous syncopated C minor allegro theme of the overture might with good reason be called the



motif of 'dark powers,' the broad phrase in E flat major



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that of Supplication, and the agitated string passage with the ominous drum taps:



that of Magic, while the well-known melody which figures prominently in the overture, in Agathe's great aria of Act II and at the end of the last Finale is obviously meant to express the Triumph of Love. Any number of such characteristic phrases are employed throughout the opera, sometimes in the voice parts, more frequently in the orchestra, wonderfully expressive of the mood or the issue of the moment. The entire score in fact is an endless film on which the emotional and atmospheric background is continuously unfolded. Wagner is more consistent, more insistent, he crystallizes the method into a system, but it is already full-fledged in Weber, as, before him, it was indicated in Mozart.

And now for the individual numbers. At the outset it should be remarked that, although Weber still observes the customary division into separate 'numbers,' there is also a more logical division into scenes, to which the other is subservient. With rare instinct for the stage he has given the work a continuity that is disturbed only by the use of dialogue. His use of accompanied recitative is masterful, and its highly developed contour already indicates an approach to the free arioso of Wagner. He introduces it, not only preceding the aria in the form of a 'scene' but often interrupting the measured cantilena of the aria itself. This and the heightened dramatic power of the melodies themselves signalize the gradual melting of the two styles into one

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—the true 'expressive' style sought for since the days of the Florentines.

The overture hardly requires comment. To say that as a symphonic work it is immortal is only part of the truth. It is the bible of nearly all students of orchestration, a favorite of every lover of pure musical beauty and a refuge of all conductors in search of an effective *cheval de bataille*. In it Weber has used the most salient themes of the opera and developed them in symphonic form, somewhat after the manner of the 'Leonore' overtures, which became the model for the concert overtures of the Romantic school.* Like its prototypes, it is a symphonic epitome of the opera. At the initial performance in the Berlin Royal theatre (*Schauspielhaus*) it created a furore and had to be repeated before the opera could proceed.

The choral introduction (with solo by Kilian) at once shows Weber's mastery of vocal part-writing, his naturalistic humor, and his innate feeling for the folk-song. The trio with chorus similarly displays his power of melodic characterization, a gift inherited, so to speak, from Mozart. With Max's 'Scene and Aria' we approach the real drama. A lilting, light-hearted waltz introduces it, dying away in open fifths and sixths of the bass, with the accented beat omitted—like Schumann's *Papillons*. The dancers have disappeared, darkness has fallen. A downward rush of the strings leads to Max's despondent recitative. Then, a graceful folk-like melody, as he muses of past happiness. Again the atmosphere darkens, another recitative—doubts and fears over the tremolo of the strings—and for a moment Samiel passes across the stage. He disappears, C minor changes to G major and a charming 3/4 melody in the wood-winds reminds our hero once more of his love. But his '*Liebesgruss*' is but the bridge to more fearful things. 'Dark powers' rise from the or-

* Weber himself wrote several of these concert overtures.

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chestra in syncopated crescendos, desperation is the theme of the declamatory arioso which closes the scene with wonderful eloquence. Caspar's song, though of a 'folkish' turn, displays his own character well, while the piccolo cuts its capers as interlude and the bassoon adds a comic touch. The same character's aria, immediately following, is powerful as an expression of wicked joy, though perhaps too rollicking toward the end. So much for Act I.

Now we come to delicious things. The duet of Ännchen and Agathe is another fine bit of characterization and descriptive tone-painting—we cannot dwell on the details. But the archness and delicacy of Ännchen's arietta are beyond words. The oboe, the flute and the clarinet vie with each other in imitating her lilting runs and sparkling turns. Agatha's great Scene and Aria, which now follows, is perhaps the musical apex of the whole work. From her first question, '*Wie nahte mir der Schlummer,*' answered by that divinely simple phrase of the clarinets and bassoons, to the moment when the yielding curtain reveals the starlit night (strings and oboes in thirds leading to a full six-four chord of the wood and strings), and she breaks forth in wonder on a long F-sharp, and the descending passage, '*Welch' schöne Nacht!*'—these are sixteen of the most eloquent measures in all music. Then comes that sweetest of all prayers, '*Leise, leise, fromme Weise,*' twice interrupted by the maiden's musings, as she 'thinks aloud,' to the delineative whisperings of the strings and wood-winds: first her listening, then the rustle of the leaves; now footsteps (soft notes of the horn); 'it is he'; she waves (shades of Isolde!); her hastening steps to meet him (rapidly climbing quavers of the strings); 'New hope, new courage'—what a swelling forth into her triumphant song of love! There is yet a moment's doubt (the wood-wind asks a question) but finally sweet, joyful abandon leading up to a rap-

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turous cadence as she hastens into his arms. No cadenzas, no cheapness—a poem noble and untainted.

The scene with Max is powerful and touching. Again Weber draws character and paints moods. The ominous short upward passage of the 'cellos as Max speaks of his errand belies the calm he feigns; Agatha's sweet solicitousness, Ännchen's light-hearted philosophy are marvellously contrasted; each of the three characters has its own melodic contour—only in their 'farewell' do their expressions unite.

Much might be written of the thrice famous Wolf's Glen scene, if space permitted. It is a marvellous piece of tone-painting, marvellously conceived and in execution a generation ahead of its time. Every device is employed to depict the horror of the scene—orchestral cacophony, the noises of the storm, howling of birds and beasts, choruses of unseen voices (always of spookish effect), and the deadly gray of the spoken word. It is to be noted that Weber has given only spoken words to Samiel, as though he did not think him worthy of musical language. The effect is striking. Like Beethoven, he employs the *melodrame* in one of the most agitated moments, the casting of the bullets.

In Act III we have a second aria by Agathe and a quasi-comic 'romanza' by Ännchen, the first inferior to its predecessor only in size and dramatic importance, the latter an added *pièce d'occasion* for the soubrette of the first performance. It is not worthy of the rest. Then the chorus of the bridesmaids, of a charming popular note, and the huntsmen's chorus, the 'finest,' in Dr. Bie's words, 'the greenest of all huntsmen's songs.' Both are sung by the people through the length and breadth of Germany. The Finale sustains the dramatic interest to the end—an exceptional feat for finales—and adds the chorus as dramatic protagonist, with an aptitude far beyond that of Beethoven, and a musical interest that surpasses most choruses that went

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before. What wonder that the enthusiasm on the first night broke all bounds. 'There went up a rejoicing, such as has not found its equal in the history of the German theatre,' says Dr. Vogel in his preface to the full score. 'Carried away by the true inspiration and spontaneous invention of the work, the German people found itself again in the *Freischütz*, where, as nowhere else, the most important moments of German sentiment had been brought to perfect expression. * * * For the German nation it is a treasure of imperishable value, whose splendor will not pass away as long as German art exists.'

IV

A composer could hardly be more unfortunate in the choice of his librettists than Weber was. Whatever induced him to entrust the arrangement of the *Euryanthe* legend to poor old Helmine von Chezy we cannot say, except it be a certain professional courtesy—for it was she, being versed in folk-lore, who suggested the subject to him. Her German middle-class propriety operated to banish any piquant suggestions from the originally French story, and incidentally robbed it of any semblance of probability that it may have had.

Its fundamentals are simple enough: a brave prince and a virtuous princess (Adolar and Euryanthe) passionately in love and about to be married; a jealous rival on either side, Lysiart and Eglantine, the former envious of Adolar's bravery and royal favor, the latter in love with Adolar. Brought together by fate, the plottings of these two rivals are combined. They obtain information of so confidential a nature as to cast doubt upon the heroine's character, thus enabling her accomplice by falsehoods to win a wager involving the hero's estate and the honor of his betrothed.

In the old French version Lysiart himself discovers the compromising secret—a birthmark which he has espied under Euryanthe's breast. Weber's librettist sought—and found—a more mysterious, and far more morbid (though quite puri-

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tanical), complication, and thereby spoiled the story. She invented a third couple, departed from this life, but living on in the spirit world (the indispensable supernatural element): Emma, Adolar's unfortunate sister, and her lover Udo, whose death in battle has driven her to suicide. One moonlit night Emma appears to her brother and Euryanthe to reveal her terrible secret, and tells them that never until tears of innocence, shed in deepest anguish, have wetted the ring from which she has sucked death, will she find rest in her grave. This, in a moment of forgetfulness, Euryanthe reveals to Eglantine, an abandoned girl whom she has befriended, and who affects the deepest love for her. Eglantine descends into the vault where Emma lies and secures the fateful ring. Lysiart, who in Act I has taunted Adolar into the wager that shall bring to him all his opponent's lands if he can win the favor of Euryanthe (thus proving her faithless), has just arrived at the castle of Nevers, and has actually succumbed to Euryanthe's charms. He overhears Eglantine's soliloquy in the garden at night, and, offering her his aid, they conclude their plot. In Act II (second scene) the wedding of Adolar and Euryanthe is about to be performed before the king, when Lysiart produces his 'proofs' of her infidelity. Her confession that she has revealed their sworn secret convinces even her lover of her guilt, also the king, who reluctantly receives Lysiart's homage as feudal lord of the forfeited duchy.

In Act III Adolar abandons Euryanthe to her fate in a lonely mountainous cavern—having renounced his legal right to visit the judgment of death upon her, because she has offered her life to save him from the attack of a dreadful serpent. In her loneliness she is discovered by the king and his retainers while hunting. Having inspired belief in her innocence, she is, after a swoon which her rescuers mistake for death, taken back to Adolar. The latter has in the meantime learned Eglantine's and Lysiart's perfidy. He challenges his enemy, just as the wicked pair are about to be married. Eglantine, who, sick with remorse, has interrupted the bridal train, breaks out in unholy exultation when she hears of Euryanthe's supposed death. News of this is conveyed by the king, who has arrived just in time to stop the duel. Finally Lysiart kills his accomplice in a rage and is led away a prisoner just as the revived Euryanthe is restored to her lover.

Impossible as this concoction is, it was to play a momentous part in the history of German opera. For do

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we not feel that there is in these two dark figures, this villainous couple of noble blood, a premonition of Telramund and Ortrud? Yes, and this virtuous heroine, tongue-tied by her heroic lover but made to break her vow of silence—it is but a step to *Lohengrin*, as it is but a step from Weber to Wagner. Weber's music foreshadows *Lohengrin* no less than Frau von Chezy's book. These choruses of knights and ladies, singing of peace, giving homage to the king, murmuring their fears and warnings and reassurances, or shouting their threats in punctuated rhythms, these deliberate, measured recitatives, alternating with ariosos of heroic breadth, and above all this harmonic sonority and a profusion of orchestral color hitherto unknown belie the age of which *Euryanthe* is a child. Let us recall that *Euryanthe* is no longer a *singspiel*—dialogue has yielded to recitative. It is the first *durchkomponierte* opera since Keiser and Weber's only one.

'The Magic Flute' was born in 1791, 'Fidelio' in 1809, *Euryanthe* in 1823—these are milestones in German opera. And *Tannhäuser* but twenty-two years later. It is interesting to trace these genealogies of operas, and to observe their gradual individualization—their Germanization in this case. The Italian influence was a constant quantity throughout the eighteenth century, and even after. Even the German *singspiel* composers were not free from it. *Euryanthe* has been called the parting of the waters. Certain Italian and French characteristics and forms are preserved, with consideration for the taste of the time. The rest is thoroughly German. Adolar's romance in Act I (*Unter blühendem Mandelbaum*), in which he sings the praises of his love, and both the first and second Finales are replete with Italianisms. Coloratura is by no means banished. Even in ensembles it flourishes; the duet of the two women in the second scene is a virtuoso piece, and bewitching as it is in its pure mu-

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sical beauty when we hear it by a Hempel and an Ober, there is really no call for such a joyous burst of song immediately after the tragic crisis of the revealed secret. At the end of it—and when the artists have been duly applauded after our barbaric custom—we have quite forgotten our agitation and are ready to enjoy Lysiart's false courtesies to the sound of heroic brass, the pretty peasants' dance, and the charming melody of Euryanthe, '*Fröhliche Klänge*,' to the whispered rhythms of the chorus. In these things Weber is Italian as Mozart was before him, though much more strongly inoculated with the virus of German folk-song.

But his feeling for dramatic unity, his disregard for the conventional operatic divisions, even more apparent here than in *Freischütz*, point the way northward. The *leit-motif* is here no less significant than in Wagner, even if less consistently used. The motives of love, of Eglantine, of Emma are all recognizable; and in a more general sense we may listen for the measured heroics of Adolar, for figures of solemnity, of honor, of defiance, accents of irony, of fear, of resolution. Every important word in the recitative has its appropriate harmonic emphasis—this is the beginning of modern German operatic declamation.

The glowing spontaneity of the opera is constant—it is a musical diadem richly set with gems of melody. Let us point only to the most brilliant. The noble aria of Adolar as he awaits the coming of Euryanthe in Act II, with its atmospheric introduction by the wind instruments, and its exuberant second section upon the famous allegro theme of the overture, is a burst of romantic song in the blush of its youth; the beautiful love duet that follows, formal as it is, makes us surrender ourselves wholly to its folk-flavored charms. The Cavatina of the abandoned Euryanthe, accompanied by strings and bassoon, is the apex of the heroine's

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part, though her first aria, the idyllic '*Glöcklein im Thale*,' yields little to it for sheer beauty. Lysiart's aria at the beginning of Act II became a model for the villains of German opera, and the duet of the intriguing pair immediately following is of deeper significance than the effusions of French high-tragedy writers. A word must be said of the choruses—always Weber's forte. They are not just choruses—something to sing for the people that fill the stage at the moment. They have a dramatic—or at least scenic—significance. Thus the knightly strains in Act I; the dramatic interjections of the men; the charming, sunny May song of the peasants in the last act; the sharp rhythms of the huntsmen's chorus, and the wedding music of Lysiart's train, which is not smooth and pretty (as Meyerbeer would have had it) but purposely obstinate, refractory in its mood. The ballet, too, has a place in this opera, for Vienna was as unhappy without it as Paris; but even that is reasonable, and forms a part of the action: in Act I it is an 'earnest round' of homage, in II and III a peasants' dance with rural accents. But our opera managers will, even to-day, insist on a French ballet with its silly toe dancing, with its *prima ballerina* and her ghastly contortions—in quasi-rural frills and tights!

The overture deserves more than a passing mention, but lack of space forbids. Its dashing heroics, its mysterious premonitions and blissful emotions, foreshadowing the action of the opera, may be heard frequently in the concert room—and probably will be for a long time to come.

Euryanthe was first performed in Vienna, Oct. 25, 1823, with the charming young Henriette Sontag in the title rôle. Its momentary success was great. Berlin produced it in 1825. But the rest of Germany remained cold to it. Not sufficiently Italian to please the Italians at Vienna, it was on the other hand perhaps

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not uncompromising enough in its Germanism to become popular like *Freischütz*. (Beethoven grumbled something about Italian 'sing-song' being necessary for a German to get his rights, when he heard it in Vienna.) Weber was in delicate health. His disappointments were little calculated to improve it. Even Dresden showed no disposition to follow the example of Berlin and Vienna—when suddenly fresh encouragement came from an unexpected source: *Oberon* was ordered from England.

V

We are nearing the year 1826, a 'fairy' year. Mendelssohn, the seventeen-year-old, writes his 'Midsummer-Night's Dream' overture, and Puck and his winsome companions are general favorites. London was curious about this new fascination of an old subject. Elizabethan England had known it—and how wonderfully; in Romantic Germany Wieland had treated it anew and it had given the impulse to that 'magic' opera craze to which Schikaneder catered (*cf.* p. 100). And now England was getting its share of it again. At the Drury Lane an 'Oberon,' with music from Mozart, Winter (the 'Magic Flute' sequellist) and Cherubini were being played. Weber's fame had spread thither. The Covent Garden manager offered him an 'Oberon' text by Planché. He accepted, but he required eighteen months to finish the score. A nightmare it must have been to him, ill as he was. He finished it in London in all haste, produced it on April 12, 1826, and died less than two months later.

Of all the wretched books Weber set, this 'Oberon' is the worst. Shakespeare and Wieland (in Sotheby's translation) were butchered into it, and an old French legend, 'Huron de Bordeaux,' added for 'human interest.' But the figures are not human at all—they are

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puppets, the rest is empty decoration. The English wanted it thus, he was told. Dr. Bie suggests that the absence of a love scene, too, was according to their wish.

Oberon and Titania have quarrelled, the issue is the usual one—the fidelity of lovers. Not till he finds an earthly couple faithful through all adversity will the fairy king go back to the fairy queen. He chafes under his self-imposed banishment, and Puck, his sprightly aid, seeks far and wide for that which will end his master's trouble. Now, Sir Huron has accidentally killed Charlemagne's son and is given an expiatory task: to go to Bagdad, kill whom he finds sitting at the Caliph's right hand, and carry off the Caliph's daughter. A fit subject for a test, thinks Oberon. In a vision he shows Huron Rezia, the Caliph's beautiful daughter, who promptly inflames his passion. He then appears to the waking knight and shows him Bagdad's turrets in the distance. Huron is off with his esquire, Sherasmin, who advises the elimination of the first (less agreeable) part of the task, and is promptly reproved by the knight, whose honor demands the killing as required by the emperor.

Rezia is to be married to Babekan, but she, also, has had visions and would prefer death to such a fate. Huron arrives just before the ceremony, finds Babekan at the right hand of the Caliph, as per schedule, and kills him in single-handed struggle. He and Sherasmin at once make off with Rezia and her maid, Fatima, respectively.

Now Oberon tries their constancy. They are shipwrecked—Rezia is caught up by pirates, Sir Huron is left for dead upon a beach. Transported by fairies to Tunis, he finds first his esquire and Fatima as slaves, and through them his own love held captive in the house of the Emir, which he enters. The Emir's wife makes love to him and the Emir, discovering him, orders him to be burned alive. Rezia intervenes, proclaiming herself his wife, and is condemned to die with him. But Oberon has judged their trials sufficient, and transports them back to Charlemagne's court where they are duly welcomed.

The imaginative, the decorative, the Shakespearean in this mish-mash has inspired Weber. The fairies and the mermaids are the favored characters. For them he

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has written lovely, colorful, titillating, sprightly and whimsical music; the introduction, the dream scene, Puck's solo, etc., are full of deliciously delicate imaginations. Puck has become rhythm, he flits through the whole score, lighting it up with flashes of delicate rhythms and queer harmonies. The mermaids sing in undulating 6/8 rhythm—another bright spot—and their charm has infected the travellers on the sea, for the quartet on shipboard (in Act II) stands out above most of the ensembles. It is this supernatural element which gives the overture its principal charm. The introduction with its harmonic alterations and muted strings to remind us that it is all a dream, the fitful rhythms after the dashing first theme is introduced, and Puck's staccato caprices, now in the high strings, now in the wood, the soft summons of the horn—these are more than human speech. The charming sentimentality of the second theme, introduced by the clarinets and answered by the violins (*dolce*), sets us to dreaming again, and our souls sway gently to the enticing rhythm of the subsidiary theme in which Rezia holds forth, ravished by memories of her lover, till he appears (despite the libretto) in the reiteration of his first theme. All this sweeps us on, through modulations and transformations, to a triumphant recapitulation—an orgiastic feast, this, of brilliant color and Romantic sonority. The hero and heroine are each let off with one aria, Huron with his fine dashing melody in Act I, and Rezia with her celebrated 'Ocean, thou mighty monster,' which set a new dramatic model, creating new visions 'between Italian passion and the tone-painting of a Haydn.' The sea, the breaking forth of the sun, the sighting of a ship, are painted in vivid colors till the joy of Rezia breaking forth in the familiar, rhythmically lilting melody (the subsidiary second theme of the overture) on 'Huron, my husband, my love,' carries us with it in its rapturous sweep. But

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alas—it is not Huron, there is no climax—buffoonery instead. Sherasmin and Fatima are buffoons, smacking of the music hall in their vulgarity—the very titles of their songs remind us of the inanity of the musical comedy. Still Weber has endowed them with some rhythmically interesting pieces.

About the rhythmic quality of 'Oberon,' by the way, Berlioz has considerable to say. 'No one has ever in the same measure liberated music from what is called the "quadrangle." In *Freischütz* he had already given numerous examples of novel phraseology. * * * In 'Oberon' we find diverse passages where the melodic tissue divides into sections of *five* measures each. * * * Often, too, his phrases have no mates. In short, his construction is never platitudinous.'

We may also add here a few words of Berlioz on Weber's harmonic peculiarities. 'His harmonic *enchainements* are of a coloring which is not found in any other master. They owe their effect, now to the alteration of one or more notes of a chord, now to little used inversions, sometimes even to the suppression of certain notes which are supposed to be indispensable. Such, for example, is the final chord of the Mermaid song where the tonic is omitted. * * * Whence the vague charm of this ending and the reveries into which it plunges the hearer. * * * His modulations, however strange, are always introduced with consummate art, without harshness, and without shocks. Though nearly always unexpected, their purpose is invariably to correspond to the expression of a sentiment, not to treat the ear to a puerile surprise. The dominant quality of his orchestration is distinction. Throughout, there is a charming coloring, a brisk but harmonious sonority and a deep understanding of the nature of each instrument, its deep sympathies and antipathies toward other members of the orchestral family.'

When 'Oberon' was performed in London the audi-

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ence was very grave. It remained cold—it might well have given Weber his final chill. Thirty-one years later (to omit its intermediate career in Germany) it was given for the first time in Paris, and Berlioz reports (in *A travers chant*) that the 'audience encored four numbers and the overture. The crowd which had during three hours drunk in with *délice* this music of so new (!) a savor, left the house in a state of veritable intoxication (*enivrement*). It was a success, a noble and grand success.' Thus revolves the wheel of history.

VI

Spohr's *Faust* (produced in Prague in 1816) was the first of the more serious operas upon this much abused subject. A long series of trifling works, beginning with the English pantomime, 'Harlequin, Faustus' by E. Gailliard in 1715, had been written around the fabulous fifteenth-century miracle doctor. The German craze for fantastic or 'magic' *singspiele* (to which we owe at least one masterpiece—Mozart's 'Magic Flute') wrought havoc with the story: from *Doctor Faust's Zaubergürtel* by Phanty (Vienna, 1790) to Seyfried's *Faust* (Vienna, 1820) the pieces are unworthy of the legend with its deeper import imparted to it by Goethe. Spohr's *Faust*, the text for which was written by J. C. Bernard (pseud.), did not really follow the Goethe drama either, but brought a rather tragic version of the folk-tale itself. In it Faust sells his soul to the devil in return for certain supernatural powers which, however, he intends to employ to altruistic ends. His human weaknesses overcome his purpose, and, committing murder, forsaking his love (Röschen), rescuing a beautiful princess (Kunigunde) and redressing her wrongs (by powers of magic) on her wedding day, he is unable to follow his better nature in his hour of

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remorse because his time is up and the devil claims his own. Mephistopheles is his companion, as in Goethe, and trials of magic are made much of in the treatment of the work.

Serious in meaning, but childish from a modern point of view, Spohr's *Faust* is thoroughly operatic in treatment, wavering between the German and Italian styles. Spohr's music is fluently melodic but organically sound; there are even dramatic effects, tender phrases, and sinister dissonances—but no continuity of dramatic expression.

'Zemire and Azor,' Spohr's next operatic work (1819), which treats of the same story as Grétry's opera of nearly fifty years before, was once much admired but did not have even so long a run as its predecessor. *Jessonda*, on the other hand, has managed to command a mild vogue (in Germany, at least) till to-day. In it the composer's musical qualities are even more pronounced than in *Faust*. His melodiousness is less Italian, but tender, expressive, in the 'violinistic' manner to which Spohr became addicted in the course of time. The classic Mozartian beauty gave way a little more to the Romantic languor of the newer Germans, but of their greater dramatic force there is hardly a trace. Spohr lacked Weber's feeling for the stage, his Romanticism was purely musical. Yet we find in his operas—especially *Jessonda*—fine suggestions of what was to come: the use of reminiscent phrases in the manner of the *leit-motif*, orchestral tone-painting and symbolism, and a growing unity of spirit in place of symmetry of form.

Jessonda was the direct result of Spohr's hearing of Weber's *Freischütz*, which he looked upon with something of disdain, tinged, perhaps, with envy. He himself had contemplated an opera upon the subject, but Weber had stolen a march on him. Spurred to greater effort and determined to outdo his younger rival, he hit

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upon a French romance in which he saw fine operatic possibilities—*La veuve de Malabar*.

Eduard Gehe, a lawyer friend of Spohr's, whose poetic ambitions were out of proportion to his talent, was entrusted with the writing of the text of *Jessonda*. It is semi-historical and contains a strong suggestion of the atmosphere of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, which came years later. The Portuguese invasion of Malabar (1509) is quite in the manner of Paris historical opera, used as background for a drama of love of which the Portuguese officer d'Acunha and a young Indian woman, the widow of the Rajah, are principals. *Jessonda* is according to the Brahmin rite to be sacrificed by fire so that she may follow her husband into the Beyond. Through a young priest, Nadori, who while delivering the fateful decree to *Jessonda* has himself fallen in love with her sister *Amazili*, Tristan learns of the heroine's threatening fate, without, however, knowing her identity, and determines to rescue her by capture. But the promise of a safe conduct previously given compels him to surrender her to the natives. Soon after, as she and her women are on their way to the holy spring within the invader's positions, Nadori brings the intelligence that the Brahmins have broken the truce themselves. This releases Tristan from his word. He captures the city and rescues *Jessonda* as she is about to die.

The overture to *Jessonda*—‘a work of art in itself,’ according to Kalbeck—is a closely knit symphonic movement in the spirit of the drama, in which the conflicting motives of barbaric dogma and the free emotions of the human heart are effectually contrasted. There is many a beautiful passage in this opera, many an expressive orchestral interlude, many a noble recitative, spirited war chorus and graceful rhythmical dances, many a fine ensemble. There are one or two really fine arias, also the duet of Nadori and the priest, contrapuntal in treatment, that of *Jessonda* and her sister, that of the sister and her lover, and a charming trio of the sisters and Nadori, who, commissioned to lead *Jessonda* to her death, falls in love with her sister instead. But, on the whole, Spohr's expressions are

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stereotyped, even though the exact mold is his own; his musical embellishments and musicianly treatment often save the music from being commonplace or even trivial.

All these faults and not such strong virtues distinguish all Spohr's other operas—he wrote ten in all. *Der Berggeist* (1825), *Pietro von Abano* (1838), *Der Alchemist* (1845), *Der Kreuzfahre* (1843-44, produced 1845), are worth naming, at least out of respect for the dignity and one-time popularity of their composer.

VII

Five years after the year of *Euryanthe* and *Jessonda*, in 1828, there appeared *Der Vampyr*, the first really successful work of the third member of the group of German romanticists, Heinrich Marschner. Marschner was a younger man than either Weber or Spohr (he was born in 1795 at Zittau in Saxony). Weber, who eight years before had produced Marschner's earlier attempt, *Aubigné*, in Dresden, was already in his grave, though Spohr continued his operatic activity to within a decade and a half of the end of Marschner's long life (1861). No less than four other works preceded 'The Vampire,' three of which remained unperformed. Not till this work did Marschner strike his own peculiar vein. The chief characters of his three operas are of the same cast—the demon in human form—whose underworld nature will not permit him to acquire human virtues. Dr. Bie indulges in an interesting fancy, drawing an analogy with Marschner's own life and character and this favorite duality of his figures. 'He suffered from his own nature—his love, his official position, his principles, his works—and fate continued to work toward his salvation. Musical and tuneful as he is, we cannot view him as a sympathetic figure, he is clear-

MARSCHNER'S 'DER VAMPIR'

sighted without being great, and diligent without being amiable, a German song and chorus singer who does not overwhelm us with his humanity.'

Marschner's brother-in-law, W. A. Wohlbrück, wrote the libretto of 'The Vampire' for him. The plot is built around the old superstitious belief that he who takes an oath by his life and breaks it shall be made to live on after death by sucking the blood of those dearest to him. The familiar pact with the Power of Evil plays a part here, as it does in *Frei-schütz*. The life of the villain is to be renewed for a year if, before the next midnight, he brings as victims 'three brides.' Lord Ruthven, the younger brother of the Earl of Marsden, is the vampire. Having died after years of absence, he is now in his ghostly after-life acclaimed the successor of his brother, meantime deceased. He is introduced to us in the company of the Master of Evil with whom he has concluded the sinister plot. He at once goes about his task, having arranged a nocturnal interview with the daughter of Berkley, Janthe, whose love he has won. He goes to meet her and, taking her in his arms, succeeds in carrying out his awful purpose before he is discovered by Berkley and his followers. They hurry away in horror and before the Vampire is fully resuscitated by the moon's rays (according to the legend) Sir Aubry, an old friend, deeply beholden to Ruthven, finds him and is enjoined by oath to reveal nothing of what he has seen or suspects. Aubry is in love with Malvina, Sir Davenant's daughter, who, however, is commanded to marry the new Earl of Marsden (namely Ruthven, the Vampire). The end of the act pictures the peasantry celebrating Malvina's birthday after she and Aubry have pleaded in vain with her father. Ruthven plays the gallant to his prospective victim and is recognized by Aubry, who, however, is bound by his oath. In Act II Ruthven finds his second victim in Emmy, a village maiden, about to be married to George, Davenant's servant. In the manner of Don Giovanni, he turns his palace over to the wedding guests while he lures the bride into the garden, and, having done his fiendish work, is shot by her fiancé. Again he revives and returns to Davenant for his own wedding. The procession is twice interrupted by Aubry. Each time on the point of breaking his oath he is warned by Ruthven, until the clock strikes one and he is at last free to speak. 'He is a vampire,' he cries. At this Ruthven is struck by lightning and the lovers are united at last by the father's consent.

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There are many dramatic weaknesses in the book. The character of Ruthven, the villainous creature who nevertheless knows his own fate, is altogether unconvincing. His demon-like lust, unmitigated by any feeling of sympathy, as in the case of Janthe, disgusts the listeners. The whole web of the play, 'too theatrical for a fairy-tale, too unreal for a drama,' is inconsistent. The music contains much that is fine, dramatically powerful, atmospherically efficient, but it seems faded to us of to-day. At its best we can only say that it approaches Weber—it is hardly a development of that master's art, only a continuation of it, and it often leans heavily upon its model. The opening scene, the Vampire's cave, is an obvious imitation of the 'Wolf's Glen' even to the key in which it is written. But the picturing of the supernatural horrors is powerful and ingenious in its detail. The shrieks of hellish laughter are no less gruesome than the moonlight resuscitations of the Vampire, pictured in variably significant motives, is uncanny. Contrasted with this is the idyllic happiness of the next scene, where awakening nature and the joy of youthful love find expression, first in the orchestra, then in Malvina's prayer and her duet with Aubry. The trio of the two with the father strongly delineates the characters. Bourgeois joviality is, next to spectral mystery, Marschner's forte. He expresses it in the peasant ensemble opening of Act II and later in the rollicking scene of fun by which he relieves the tension created through the imminent catastrophe of Emmy's death—a masterful stroke. Emmy's song in the second scene is full of touching charm and her Romance about the Vampire is perhaps the best piece in the work. The use of leading motives should be mentioned, though Marschner did not develop it farther than Weber or Meyerbeer. As an instance, when Aubry threatens to break his oath, an agitated chromatic phrase, accompanied by tremolo strings, is heard, and

MARSCHNER: 'DER TEMPLER UND DIE JÜDIN'

this recurs later when Ruthven pictures the consequences of perjury. A device which became common with modern composers, is that of picturing an increasing stress by repeated reiteration of a phrase, raising it first by semi-tones, then by whole tones. Marschner employs it notably in the highly dramatic scene between Ruthven and Emmy in the garden. The overture is developed in the accepted manner of the Romantic school, out of the motives representing the chief and contrasting motives of the drama.

Der Templer und die Jüdin, Marschner's next opera, followed the very next year, being performed in Leipzig in December, 1829. The text, again by Wohlbrück, is founded on Scott's well-known novel, 'Ivanhoe.' It follows the story with considerable fidelity, but, as the title implies, lays rather more stress on the relations of the Templar Guilbert and the virtuous Jewess, Rebecca, than upon the loves of Ivanhoe and Rowena.

Briefly, the first act depicts the forest passage on the return from the Ashby tournament of Cedric and his train, and Isaac of York, both set upon by de Bracy and Guilbert respectively, who have combined their strength for mutual interest. Friar Tuck and his merry outlaws, with Locksley at their head and the disguised King Richard as a chance guest, are introduced in another scene and left setting out to defeat the noble robbers. Still another takes us to de Bracy's castle, whither the captives have been taken, and shows us the heroic Rebecca combating the importunities of the love-mad templar, who is finally summoned away by the signal of battle. His place is taken by the wounded Ivanhoe, and at the end Guilbert returns and carries off his victim as all else is lost. The second act, again in the woods, brings the recognition of the Black Knight as Richard Cœur de Lion (rather prematurely); then another onslaught of Guilbert upon his victim in the preceptory of Templestowe, and finally the trial of Rebecca as a witch, ending with Rebecca's asking for a champion and Guilbert's selection as the opposing champion for the Order. The third and last act takes the reconciliation of Ivanhoe and his father Cedric for granted, brings the uniting of the two lovers and, after a change of scene, 'The Judgment of God.' Ivanhoe's

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appearance and the fall of Guilbert with the timely arrival of Richard to chide the Templars end the opera.

The drama again shows obvious faults, both in the portrayal of characters and arrangement of situations. The music does not alleviate them. The Romantic idiom is applied to the realistically dramatic with less success perhaps than it is applied to the portrayal of the supernatural in 'The Vampire,' although Marschner must be credited here with the development of recitative toward the arioso which Weber had begun, by further rounding off its contour and increasing its force of expression. All this foreshadows Wagner just as the heroics of *Ivanhoe* and *Richard* and the Judgment of God may well be taken to foreshadow *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*. But the mawkishness of the confirmed romanticist is not yet tempered by the incisive discords and free progressions of the new era; coloratura and the conventional form division are not yet abandoned, and what appears to us fresh and genial in Weber often partakes of the stereotype with Marschner.

The text for *Hans Heiling* was written by Eduard Devrient, singer and dramatist, who also created the title rôle when the work was performed in Berlin in 1833. Its basis is a legend of the Siebengebirge—folklore, inexhaustible fount of inspiration, furnished subject after subject for the work of these Romanticists, good, bad or indifferent. The inner relationship which exists between these various themes is often striking. We have pointed out the foreshadowing of *Lohengrin* by *Euryanthe*—a similar position is occupied by *Hans Heiling* in regard to 'The Flying Dutchman.' Here as there, the relationship extends to the musical material as well.

Hans Heiling is the son of the Queen of the Earth Spirits, begotten by a human. The earthly element of his nature over-

MARSCHNER'S 'HANS HEILING'

powers him when on one of his earthly sojourns he meets a simple peasant girl, Anna. He leaves his mother's realm determined to enjoy earthly love to the full. He has become schoolmaster in the village where Anna dwells, and, renowned for learning and wealth, he has wooed and won. But his magic book—the only token of his elfish powers—by chance falls into his fiancée's hands and, recognizing its cabalistic signs, she is so terrified that only by throwing it to the flames can Heiling quiet her. Thus he sacrifices all supernatural powers for her love. At a country festival Anna meets Konrad, a ranger, for whom she conceives a genuine affection, for only her vanity has made her yield to Heiling's attentions. Torn by her new emotions, she is in Act II warned by Heiling's mother, who appears to her in the wood and tells her of Heiling's real character. Thereupon she yields to Konrad's love and confides to him her secret. A conflict ensues between her two suitors; Anna shrinks from her first betrothed, who savagely attacks Konrad with a dagger. Hastening to the forest he appeals to his gnomes, but they deride him who has destroyed the token of his own power; until by remorse he propitiates them once more. Armed with a new sceptre he seeks vengeance. But before the very church in which the young couple's nuptials are being celebrated by the village folk, his mother induces him to renounce human happiness and return to his subterranean world.

Hans Heiling is not only Marschner's masterpiece; it is one of the most important works of the Romantic school and an essential link in the chain which connects it to the music dramas of Wagner. If its score is not lighted up by the constant fire of genius like its Weber prototypes, it compensates us by a remarkably even, high-grade workmanship; by ingenious invention, and by dramatic unity, force and freedom of expression. On the other hand, there is an excess of characteristically romantic stereotype, mannerisms of feature, harmonic figures that pall by their too frequent use. But the charm of the whole work, its spontaneity, and genuineness cannot escape us. Here at last, in this German woodland legend, the composer is at home, just as he was a stranger to the English at-

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mosphere of his earlier works. All his easy-going geniality comes into effective play in picturing the *Gemütlichkeit*, the warm joviality of his German peasantry.

The most remarkable element of the work, from the historical viewpoint, is the further development of the free melodic recitative, which we already had occasion to mention, the strong delineative quality of the musical phrase closely corresponding to each literary phrase. This quality is most freely displayed in the prologue (*Vorspiel*) which *precedes* the overture and which depicts Hans Heiling's leave-taking from his mother. The disposition of the musical dialogue, choruses, etc., is entirely free, while the orchestra depicts the activities of the subterranean world, in a manner as strikingly assimilating Wagner's as these gnomes are akin to the Nibelungen.* Despite this freedom of treatment, the whole scene is given a strong resemblance of form by the rounding out of the atmospheric material; the final return of the gnomes to their activities of the opening—with a similar musical figure. The return of such figures in a consistent fashion, the *leit-motif* system in other words, is the only missing element of the music drama. The unity of form and spirit in each division, rather than the spiritual unity of the entire work, is the ideal. Yet there are motivistic allusions whose force is all the greater for their sparing use. Take Heiling's promise to return to his mother 'when my wreath has withered, when my heart shall break' (in the prologue) as an example. This phrase, set to the same motif, coming to his lips again in the last scene of the opera, determines his resignation.

This whole prologue must be accepted as prefiguring not only the texture of the modern music drama, but as the model for the species, of which the *Rheingold* is but

* It is worth mentioning that in Act III, during Heiling's aria of revenge, Marschner employs the identical rhythm that Wagner uses for the Nibelungen's forge. In the first act, too, he suggests the country festival with a motive not unlike the St. John's festival motif in *Die Meistersinger*.

MARSCHNER'S 'HANS HEILING'

the development on a larger scale, namely the supernatural prelude to an earthly drama, dictating the greater forces beyond. The supernatural in *Hans Heiling* is adroitly suggested at different stages of the play—its voices are still heard dying away as Heiling is introduced to us in the cosy interior of his earthly dwelling; the genial atmosphere of which is so charmingly reflected in the introduction and the trio between Heiling, Anna and her mother. Again in the forest scene, when Anna is apprised of Heiling's true character, the spirit world is conjured up, as it were, like a hallucination of the heroine's own mind, after the really fine powerful aria, '*Einst war so tiefer Frieden*,' which depicts the changed character of the at first simple, light-hearted maiden now that love and trouble have come into her heart. (The recitative preceding this aria hardly yields to the aria itself in melodic variety, while the aria maintains the dramatic freedom of the recitative, another notable example of the fusion of the two styles.) Finally, in the last act, the gnome world again appears on the stage, perhaps with less convincing reason and too theatrical a manner, for here the practical stage craftsman has done violence to logic and atmosphere. The Queen of the Earth Spirits is all too real and the peasantry accept her quite too much as a matter of course. The effect of the unison choruses of the gnomes against the harmonic comments of the peasants should be noted.

But despite these shortcomings the hand of a real dramatist is seen throughout. Hans Heiling, unlike Ruthven, appeals to our sympathy, his humanity touches us, and knowing the duality of his nature and the reason for his malevolent outbursts we can forgive him, feel sorry for him. His aria, '*An jenem Tag*' (Act I, No. 3), in which he reveals his love for Anna (perhaps the finest piece in the opera), is a strong portrayal of passion. The effect of the climax, 'Thus,

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yea thus, do I love thee,' as he falls down at his sweetheart's feet; her consoling, almost embarrassed little speech in dialogue, and the mother's sober comment are a master-stroke of contrast.

Dialogue, and especially *accompanied* dialogue (*melodrame*), is used with wonderfully telling effect, especially in the first finale, when Heiling is urged to allow Anna to dance with Konrad, with the luring waltz rhythm as background, again at the beginning of Act II, when Gertrude, the mother, awaits the return of Anna and the storm rages outside, and again in Heiling's melodrama at the beginning of Act III where the orchestra goes beyond Weber and 'speaks with the lips of our time.' 'Here Marschner fulfilled the Romantic ideal with a realism hitherto not attempted.' Konrad is a simple, charming figure, not pompously heroic, but light-hearted as his kind. His *Lied* about the damsel who thought she married a count and found he was a Kobold is characteristic of the romanzas and ballads of the Romantic opera, which at their best contain a subtle suggestion of the underlying idea of the drama.

The dramatic climax of the opera comes in Act II, with Anna's revelation of Heiling's spirit nature, and Heiling's attempted murder of his rival. His scenic climax is in the last finale, where charm of atmosphere, rhythm, song, contrast of color, the pretty game of blind man's buff interrupted by Heiling's spectre-like reappearance, the appearance of the queen to the sound of trumpet on the stage, the tragic climax of Heiling's return (with the *leit-motif*) and the final chorus of peace all combine to give the largest effect of which German opera was capable in 1833. If we compare it to the pompous brilliance, the magnificent humbug of the Paris grand opera (of Meyerbeer *et al.*) we can understand why, despite its shortcomings, the German Romantic opera was able to develop into the biggest and deepest musical stage works of all times,

ALBERT LORTZING

while its glittering rival ended in magnificent stagnation. Marschner's later operas, *Der Holzdieb* (1825); *Lucretia* (1826); *Des Falkner's Braut* (1832); *Der Bäber* (1837); *Adolph von Nassau* (1845), etc., have not long outlived their composer. He is now known by his three best operas, and chiefly by *Hans Heiling*, which is still occasionally performed in German opera houses.

Another name must be recorded in this connection, but lack of space forbids our dwelling upon it. Gustav Albert Lortzing (1801-51) is at least a by-product of the romantic period, light as is the substance with which he works. In one sense he represents the development of the romantic opera in the comic or lighter vein; in another, the revival of the *singspiel* of an earlier generation with an added romantic tinge. The supernatural element is not absent from his texts, but more generally they deal with the every-day life of the middle class. It is the parallel to the already forgotten school of Kotzebue and Raupach, full of pretty sentimentalities, good bourgeois fun, mistaken personalities, disguises, etc. Lortzing was, so to speak, born and bred in the theatre, and wrote his own texts—usually made-over comedies on well tried subjects. His music has an easy charm, little science but much melody. For Lortzing had a veritable genius for melody. He sang in many of his own works himself, he conducted them too, and often staged them himself. Many of them became popular, enormously popular, and yet Lortzing died poor. A happy sort of vagabond who was thoroughly irresponsible but knew what he was about. We can here only name the titles of some of his operas: *Die beiden Schützen* (1835); *Zar und Zimmermann* (1837); *Der Wildschütz* (1842); *Undine* (1845); *Der Waffenschmied* (1846); *Zum Grossadmiral* (1847) and *Die Rolandsknappen* (1849). *Wildschütz* is probably his most original work, but *Zar und Zimmermann*, which relates an incident in the life of Peter the

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Great of Russia, who, according to history, travelled to Holland and disguised himself as a ship's carpenter, is still the most popular of Lortzing's works in Germany.

In this group also belongs Conradin Kreutzer (1780-1849), whose *Nachtlager von Granada* is still frequently played in Germany, and Otto Nicolai (1810-49), whose *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, a German adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' maintains a similar popularity in its home country.

And a further development—or, better, degeneration—is to be recorded here. Just as the *opéra comique* ultimately sifted down to the *opéra bouffe*, so the comic romantic opera deteriorated into the ultra-sentimental twaddle of which Victor Nessler's *Trompeter von Säkkingen* is the type.

On the other hand there is to be remembered an attempt to raise the romantic opera to a higher literary and more advanced musical level, which is represented by Schumann's *Genoveva*. As an opera *Genoveva* is a failure. Schumann was as incapable of writing an opera as Brahms would have proved himself had he tried. He wasted a great deal of good ambition and fine musicianship on an impossible task. Recent revivals, if they have met with better acceptance than the original performance in 1848, have only borne out this fact more forcibly. Moreover, the text of *Genoveva*, an adaptation of Hebbel's tragedy, has been called 'one of the most horrible disfigurations that a beautiful tale has ever experienced.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE OPÉRA COMIQUE AND THE DRAME LYRIQUE

The new era of *opéra comique*: Boieldieu; Auber; Adam; Hérold; Flotow; Offenbach and the operetta—the lyric opera, its origin and characteristics; exoticism and local color; texts and librettists—Gounod's early operas; *Faust*—*Roméo et Juliette*—Thomas: *Mignon*; *Hamlet*—Bizet: *Carmen*.

I

A SUBJECT to which we should, but for lack of space, devote a chapter by itself, upon which, indeed, a whole volume of most entertaining character might be written, is the French *opéra comique*. It is a type so individualized, so nationalistic, so delightfully sophisticated, associated with such interesting personalities and set in an atmosphere so alluring that the writer is tempted to linger upon it, to make it an object in itself instead of a mere preliminary to the task in hand. For, it is sad to relate, the *opéra comique* maintains no longer an independent existence. It lives on, indeed, in the memory of the old theatre-goer with his delightful reminiscences while, academically speaking, its spirit lives on in the more serious form of opera which it engendered—the *drame lyrique* of Gounod, Bizet, and their successors. Hence its position in this chapter. Lack of space, as we have already indicated, prevents us from giving more than the most cursory sketch.

In Chapter III we have spoken of the origin of this genus. In Chapter IV we have recorded a development of it into a more serious, quasi-tragic species, a phenomenon that will be seen to happen again. Needless

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to say, the purely comic variety went on, along its merry way, beloved now not only by the bourgeois, but by every type of Parisian, and presently by every cosmopolitan and pseudo-cosmopolitan the world over. Its masters had caught the mundane tone, the piquancy, the wit and the sparkle that appeal to an essentially intellectual audience, an audience that wants to be entertained, amused, with little taste for æsthetic analysis or emotional exaltation, but with considerable literary discrimination and an appetite for highly spiced fare. Their works succeed by virtue of a plot full of piquant situations and pointed dialogue, clever acting, pretty songs of every variety, graceful dance rhythms, and brilliant orchestration. A sort of cosy chit-chat, the art of the raconteur, here found an outlet such as it never did before or since in an art form. A conversational tone that all the world understood and took up assiduously, a charm of worldly matter-of-course, a flowing style in which half-familiar things repeated themselves in a pleasant sort of conventionality—these were some of the attributes that assured the immense popularity of the *opéra comique*.

Technically it is a descendant of the Italian *opera buffa*, but its literary character is higher. It is more often comedy than farce, and frequently of a simple, bourgeois, sentimental cast somewhat akin to the early pastoral type of vaudeville. But it is as far removed from the vaudeville as the Romantic opera is from the singspiel, by virtue of its greater musical elaboration and unity. Into this musical texture there enters everything from the simple pastoral ditty to high Italian coloratura. Rossini, Weber, Meyerbeer all had their share of influence. But above all, the graceful rhythms of the French dances, a certain easy symmetry, a characteristically French conciseness of statement, a *net-teté*, finish of detail, artistic finesse, color and dash are indispensable ingredients.

THE OPÉRA COMIQUE: BOIELDIEU

The year 1800 may be conveniently taken as the starting-point of this generation. Grétry and Monsigny, revered masters of a former one, were still living, and Cherubini was at the height of his powers as composer and pedagogue. The new Conservatoire was in full swing. Méhul's *Ariodant*, Berton's *Délire*, Dalayrac's *Maison à vendre*, Mengozzi's *Dame voilée* were some of the novelties of that year. Dalayrac wrote two operas a year regularly; Mengozzi was a famous singer, whose success as composer threatened his vocal reputation. But there also appeared two operas of a certain Boieldieu, then twenty-five years of age: *Boniowski* and *Le Calif de Bagdad*.

François-Adrien Boieldieu, the founder of the new era of *opéra comique*, was born in 1775 at Rouen. His father, the archbishop's secretary, had written the libretto for his eighteen-year-old son's first opera, *La fille coupable*. That and its successor had such good local success that the young composer ventured to Paris. There he met Cherubini, Méhul and other celebrities and came under their influence. But he got little real training, perhaps a happy circumstance, for his naïve spontaneity remained unspoiled. He had any amount of originality and resource, worked rather leisurely and tried no extraordinary things. *Les deux lettres* and *La famille suisse* had preceded the two operas of 1800. Their fresh melodiousness pleased immensely. But *Zoraïme et Zutnare* (1798) was his first real success. For some years his productivity was interrupted by the fact that an unfortunate marriage to a popular dancer drove him out of Paris. He went to St. Petersburg and became court composer. But in 1810 he returned and two years later made a 'hit' with the famous *Jean de Paris*, the story of a Dauphin who travels incognito to meet the Princess of Navarre, his fiancée. Both are disguised and meet at an inn, where her recognition of him occasions lively situations. *Le*

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chaperon rouge (1818) was nothing short of a triumph, and *La dame blanche* (1825) made its composer well-nigh immortal. It was followed by *Les deux nuits* (1826), which, however, had only a *succès d'estime*. There are numerous minor works that are not worth recording. Boieldieu died in 1834.

La dame blanche is founded on a text which is a combination of Scott's 'Guy Mannering' and 'The Monastery.' The Laird of Avenel, a fugitive from Scotland after the battle of Culloden, has placed his estates into the hands of his steward Gaveston, who after some years decides to sell castle and land. A traditional belief that the castle is haunted by a White Lady is fostered by him so as to discourage bids from the neighboring country people. One of the farmers, Dickson, who is summoned to the castle by Anna, an orphan protégée of the Laird, cannot be persuaded to compete for the property, but George Brown, a young soldier, who has just arrived, has an interview with the White Lady (none other than Anna in disguise), who recognizes him as the rightful heir of Avenel and promises to help him regain the estates. Having discovered a treasure in the statue of the White Lady she enables him to outbid Gaveston, and, of course, Anna becomes a happy bride.

The immediate popularity of this opera was enormous. A whole web of stories grew up about its composition. An omnibus line is said to have been named after it. And to some extent it has preserved its popularity to this day. A certain nobility of tone, a fine symmetry, good characterization and lively originality have kept it alive. It has vigor and grace, and it has tenderness which sometimes sinks to the level of sentimentality. It is still free from the influence of Rossini and stands as one of the most sympathetic examples of its school.

Isouard (1777-1818) was Boieldieu's rival. He came to Paris under the name of Niccolò (his Christian name) and soon made all the world talk about himself. He was a hard worker, yielded to various influences,

Composers of the Opéra Comique:

Auber
Adam

Boieldieu
Hérold



THE OPÉRA COMIQUE: ISOUARD; AUBER

Italian and French, hence fell between two stools, was not very successful and died young. His *Billet de loterie* was once a great favorite. But with its Italian coloratura it soon became old-fashioned, despite its graceful charm, and is hardly more than a name to-day. *Cendrillon* is a highly ornamented operatic version of a simple fairy tale. *Joconde* shows the influence of Boieldieu. All in all Isouard lacked the real French *esprit* and had too little originality to atone for the lack.

Auber (1782-1871) is a very different sort. He was the longest-lived of them all and perhaps the most successful. He spans two generations with his career. We have already met him as the composer of a work of real importance in the history of opera, *La muette de Portici*; but his proper field was comic opera. Like most of his colleagues he had the hankering after 'higher' things, but he alone had the courage to cut loose from the comique and boldly grasp after the laurels of the 'grand' opera. And he returned to the lighter form, none the worse for his experience, turning more frankly in the direction of the operetta, becoming more emphatically rhythmic, yielding to the spirit of the dance.

There are few more sympathetic figures in music than Auber. The son of a court officer under Louis XVI, who painted, fiddled and sang, and ended up as an art dealer at Caen, and the grandson of a *peintre du roi*, he was thoroughly imbued with the artistic incubus, and refused to enter business as his father wished. He wrote little operas for private performances, and Cherubini, having heard one, induced him to study. Several more got public hearings and finally, in 1820, he achieved a genuine success with *La bergère châteleine*. Henceforth he wrote innumerable operas, good, bad, and indifferent, permanently associated himself with the successful librettist, Scribe, hardly

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ever left Paris, became Academician and director of the Conservatoire after Cherubini, propitiated young aspirants and all through maintained the most retiring and modest demeanor possible.

After *La bergère châteleine* Auber put out *Emma* (1821), *La neige* (1823), among others, in which he maintains the usual mixture of styles and makes free use of Italian coloratura. Then followed collaborations, with Boieldieu and with Hérold, and then, in 1825, *Le maçon*, in which he struck the charmingly bourgeois tone for which he is noted. Real warmth of feeling, occasional dramatic intensity and characterization, besides grace, amiability and lightness of touch made *Le maçon* an international favorite for generations. It is simple, direct in its appeal, thoroughly Gallic, and devoid of all Italianisms, especially coloratura. It is the story of a pair of lovers who have been immured and are saved by the mason. The scene in which they are saved brings one of these 'intensely melodic effusions,' a 'touching, glowingly vocal, mobile melodic phrase which became a specialty with these composers and gave a new type to subsequent operatic history.' *Le maçon* had its bourgeois pendant in *La fiancée* (1829), and in 1830 Auber crowned his light opera career with *Fra Diavolo*. In the meantime he had scored successfully in the Grand Opera arena with *La muette* and applied the clever novelty of a dumb, dancing chief character to comic opera in *Le Dieu et la Bayadère* (1830). He made another, less successful, excursion into grand opera with *Gustave III* (on the theme that Verdi later used for his 'Masked Ball') and into Romantic opera with *Le lac des fées* (1839). Of his later comic operas *Le cheval de bronze* (1835) and *Les diamants de la couronne* stand predominant. The rest for the most part betray the composer's advanced age.

Perhaps, when all is said and done, *Fra Diavolo* will

OPÉRA COMIQUE: AUBER; ADAM

preserve Auber's name better than anything he has done, grand or comic. In Bie's words, it is 'the most charming (*entzückend*) thing that the French musical spirit has produced: a jolly text overlaid with a music so charmingly mobile, so genially amiable, of such unbounded humor, so rich in ideas, so full of harmless pleasure and worldly chivalry that it constitutes a laughing victory of a finely drawn yet temperamental art over a content that amounts to nil.'

And that content, as comic operas go, is yet one of the best on record. It is the story of a chivalrous bandit, who robs an English Lord and his Lady by posing successfully as a Marquis and paying court to her ladyship. When he is trapped at the inn of Terracina in the act of attempting to recover his lost booty, he nonchalantly steps out of a cupboard in the room of the landlord's daughter, declares himself to be her lover and accepts the challenge of her sweetheart, Lorenzo, the captain of the soldiers out for his capture. But a trap which he has laid for the soldiers is sprung upon himself when his identity is revealed through the careless prattle of his two unspeakably funny pals, and he goes to his doom as a gentleman—having cleared the good name of Zerlina and opened the way for her happiness with Lorenzo.

As he had made his tragic opera really tragic, so Auber made his comic opera truly comic. He does not become mawkishly sentimental, maintains his good humor throughout; his ease of melodic invention, his dramatic handling of rhythm and his allegiance to the dance give his work a sparkle from beginning to end. Here we have the finished technique of the couplet form, the perfect disposition of ensembles, a veritable virtuosity in the construction of the final stretto. The dance, a mere accessory to French opera thus far, here became its nerve.

Adolphe-Charles Adam (1803-56) is not to be taken so seriously. Wagner's remark that at one time he was in danger of making music 'à la Adam' indicates the contempt in which he was held by serious men.

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He himself confessed that he wished nothing than to write music that was easily understood and entertaining. But he had such a genuine melodic talent (soon discovered by Boieldieu, his teacher) that some of his works were able to maintain a great popularity for a long time, even outside of France. Such was *Le postillon de Lonjumeau* (1836), which shows his positive qualities at their best. It has a fine symmetry, is full of witty repartee, expressive little solos, colorful ensembles and pretty dance-refrains.

Adam made his début with *Pierre et Cathérine* (1829) and wrote numerous other works of the lightest genre, among them *Le châlet* (written in two weeks); *Au fidèle berger*; *La rose de Péronne*; *Le roi d'Yvetot*; *La poupée de Nuremberg*, and *Giralda*. The last-named, though less popular because of an inferior plot, has not only much rhythmic and melodic charm, but real feeling, dramatic expression and life. Adam founded the Théâtre National in 1847, but the revolution of 1848 ruined his finances and he was forced to abandon his enterprise. He became professor of composition at the Conservatoire in 1848.

Louis-Joseph-Ferdinand Hérold (1791-1833) was somewhat of an internationalist and very much of an eclectic. A pupil of Méhul in composition, he went to Italy and made his début in Italian opera in Naples, collaborated with Boieldieu on an 'occasional' opera, *Charles de France*, and with Auber on a grand opera, *Vendôme en Espagne*, wrote many successful ballets for the Opéra (where he was chorus master), turned out numerous comic operas; he labored with bad texts, imitated everybody and incidentally imbibed a good deal of the spirit of German romanticism. For the last reason his *Zampa* (1831) has long remained popular in Germany, while in France *Le pré aux clercs* (1832) is regarded as his masterpiece, having reached its thousandth performance in 1871. His great popularity be-

OPÉRA COMIQUE: HÉROLD

gan with *Marie* (1826), which had a hundred performances in its first year. This was preceded by *Les rosières*, *La clochette*, *Le muletier* and several unsuccessful works.

Zampa is a rather ridiculous story of a nobleman turned pirate, whose chief aim in life seems to be the ruin of fair women. His latest prospective victim is Camilla, the fiancée of his brother, Count Alfonso, whom he has captured, together with his prospective father-in-law, and holds for high ransom—the hand of Camilla and the fortunes of her father. But the statue of a former victim, Albina, becomes animated and, as he is about to seize Camilla in the chapel where she has sought sanctuary, drags him to the water's edge where he is swallowed up by the waves.

The music of *Zampa* is partly tender, partly trivial. Italian coloratura, Weberish romance, Bellini duets and conventional buffoonery of subordinate characters mingle with pretty songs, choral serenades and some fine details of workmanship. Altogether it is, as a commentator calls it, 'a sample card of styles,' the best part of which has been saved into a very popular overture.

In *Le pré aux clercs* Hérold has paid as decided a compliment to Rossini as he had paid to Weber in *Zampa*. From the overture to the finale the shallow gaiety of the Italian style is the prevailing note. Grateful situations, conventional workmanship, Parisian local color and for the rest rather commonplace invention are its chief characteristics.

The plot, which is full of confusing intrigues and conspiracies, prefigures in some respects that of the 'Huguenots.' In it the same Margaret of Navarre favors the love of Mergy, a young Bernese, and one of her maids of honor. The king is averse to the match, having destined the lady for one of his own favorites. Strategy and much disguise finally win the day and the couple are secretly married in the chapel of the 'Clerks' Meadow,' which gives the opera its title.

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Friedrich, Freiherr von Flotow (1812-83) was a young diplomat from Mecklenburg who joined this circle of Parisians to add his touch of German sentimentality and musical alertness. With the Belgian Albert Grisar (1808-69) * he joined the class of the Bohemian Reicha at the Conservatoire, and collaborated with his fellow student on two operas. With him and Pilati he brought out 'The Shipwreck of Medusa' at the Théâtre de la Renaissance in 1835 and thereafter produced a number of unpretentious, light pieces in Hamburg, Vienna, etc., and in Paris, which he visited for extended periods through his life. *L'esclave du Camoëns* was produced in Paris (1843), *Alessandro Stradella* in Hamburg (1844), and *Martha*, his most surviving work, in Vienna (1847). *Indra* (1853) and some less successful operas were produced at the Berlin Opera House. After 1863 Flotow was again in Paris producing works of the operetta type, with varying success. *Stradella* and *Martha* are still popular, the former in Germany, the latter the world over.

Alessandro Stradella tells the romantic story of the semi-legendary Italian opera composer of the eighteenth century, whose life was briefly recounted on pp. 19f. Its music has been called a happy mixture of instinct and convention. *Martha*, on the other hand, may well be designated as a model of its kind and period. To-day it sounds not only thoroughly old-fashioned but downright trivial. Nevertheless it is popular rather than banal and a dispassionate critic must admire its technical perfection and the smooth flow of its folk-like melodies.

* Grisar was a native of Antwerp, escaped a commercial career and made his début in Brussels with *Le mariage impossible* (1833). In Paris he produced *Sarah*; *L'an 1000*; *La Suisse à Trianon*; *Les travestissements*. After further studies under Mercadante in Naples he brought out *Gilles ravisseur*; *Les porcherons*; *Bonsolo*, *Monsieur Pantalon*; *Les amours du diable*; *La chatte merveilleuse*; *Douze innocents*, etc. With Flotow he collaborated on *Lady Melvil* and *L'eau merveilleuse*, with Boieldieu on *L'opéra à la cour*.

OPÉRA COMIQUE: FLOTOW; OFFENBACH

The plot tells the story of an eccentric lady of the court of Queen Anne, who disguises herself as a servant and with her maid goes to the statute fair at Richmond, where both are promptly hired by two farmers. They both fall in love with their new 'masters,' and *vice versa*. When, after being led to their new stations, the maids escape, the farmers are left in distress. Lionel, one of them, soon after recognizes his 'maid,' Martha, in the Lady Henrietta, who, of course, rejects his advances, and the poor young fellow is driven to distraction. But Lady Henrietta repents, and when Lionel is discovered to be, not a farmer at all but the rightful Earl of Derby, all goes well—not, however, till his reason is restored by means of a mock fair that brings 'Martha' back to his mind.

With Jacques Offenbach (1819-80) we reach the extreme boundaries of *opéra comique*. Offenbach, a German Jew from Cologne, who came to Paris in his boyhood and became an ultra-Parisian, followed the genre (which had been swinging more and more to the side of the farce) to its logical conclusion. His operettas or *opéras bouffes* are, indeed, musical farces, and their music consists of tunes of the simplest popular variety, a species that the French have termed 'musiquette.' Nevertheless it has a certain piquant charm, being ingenious in its melodic turns and graceful in its rhythms, and it suited the popular French taste to a T. Offenbach was at first cellist at the Opéra Comique, then conductor of the Théâtre Français, where he had a flurry of success with a *Chanson de Fortunio* interpolated in de Musset's 'Chandelier.' Thereupon he opened the Bouffes Parisiens, his own theatrical venture, where he brought out his own pieces with varying success. In this he had been preceded by Hervé, who also brought out pieces of light character on a stage of his own.

After 1866 Offenbach began to supply other theatres with his productions and was soon the most sought-after man in the theatrical business. There is a contemporary caricature of the composer which portrays

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him in the midst of theatre managers begging him for the manuscripts he is turning out by the wholesale. He produced no less than 102 stage pieces, many of which are, however, in one act. As a mirror of Parisian life under the Second Empire they have a certain historical value. None is worthy of more than mention here. The most successful of them were *Orphée aux Enfers* (1858); *La belle Hélène* (1864); *Barbe-bleue* (1866); *La vie Parisienne* (1866); *La Grand-duchesse de Gérolstein* (1867), and *Madame Favart* (1879). *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, which he left unfinished, and which was produced posthumously in 1881, is the only one of Offenbach's works that lays claim to higher consideration. It is a work of undoubted charm, imbued with a genuinely romantic atmosphere that is still capable of being enjoyed to-day. It shows Offenbach to have been a musician of great talent and possibly genius.

The text of this opera, by Barbier, is an extremely ingenious and novel sort of fantasy. It consists of a prologue, in which Hoffmann is greeted by his fellow students in Luther's Inn at Nuremberg and provoked into telling the stories of his three loves. The three acts represent his stories. The first infatuation is with a ravishing beauty with an equally ravishing voice, who turns out to be an automaton and breaks while dancing with Hoffmann. The second love is a notorious coquette to whose wiles the young man falls a victim and who leaves him with mockery on her lips. The third is a consumptive girl whose beautiful singing has charmed Hoffmann, but whose father, knowing that it will mean her death, has made her promise never to sing. But a Doctor Miracle, jealous of Hoffmann, and an enemy of the father, induces her, by summoning her mother's voice from the grave, to break her promise. She falls dead and Miracle blames Hoffmann. In the epilogue the student is acclaimed by his fellows, and he finishes the famous Ballad of Klein-Zach, which he had begun in the prologue.

Offenbach had several followers who achieved real popularity. The best of them, perhaps, is Planquette, whose *Cloches de Cornville* ('Chimes of Normandy')

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is still an international favorite. Lecocq, the composer of *Mamselle Angot* (1872), was, however, the most celebrated of his school in France. The same school found its Viennese representative in Franz von Suppé, the composer of *Das Mädchen vom Lande* (1848), *Fatinitza* (1876), *Boccaccio* (1882) and the extremely popular 'Poet and Peasant' overture, which is still frequently heard. From him sprang the whole Viennese operetta progeny of Johann Strauss, etc., which made its chief asset out of the Viennese waltz with its popular fascination. Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron* are its chief classics. Even the American Reginald de Koven, with his charming 'Robin Hood,' 'Rob Roy,' etc., is to be reckoned among the ramifications of this school.

Perhaps a word might here be interpolated concerning the English comic operas, more properly operettas, of Gilbert and Sullivan. They were, no doubt, influenced by the products of some of the foregoing composers, but are of so special a character (deriving from the peculiarities of native English humor and partaking of the nature of the English popular ballad) that they might with more justice be designated as a direct revival of the eighteenth-century ballad-opera in modern guise. These works are so well known, and so easy and immediate in their appeal, that no further comment upon them is necessary. The titles of the best of them are 'Trial by Jury,' 'Pinafore,' 'The Pirates of Penzance,' 'Patience,' 'Iolanthe,' 'The Mikado,' 'The Yeomen of the Guard.' Sir Arthur Sullivan was born in 1842 and died in 1900.

II

Now let us dwell for another moment on the gay company of the *opéra comique*. Auber, Meyerbeer and Halévy, we should remember, were as much at home in

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that sphere as they were in the field of grand opera, though a host of others, who had no greater pretensions, made up the bulk of comic opera writers. Adam tried the big thing, but was unsuccessful; until 1847 he held the boards of the Comique; Albert Grisar wrote till after 1860. For the rest the Offenbach operetta, with its sparkling persiflage and piquant dance rhythms, supplied all the demand for gayety *per se*. The rest of it—the touching social comedy, the things that delighted the bourgeois heart, the sentimental and the mildly serious side of comic opera gradually crystallized into a new genre, a new composition of elements which we shall term the Lyric Opera—being known in its own habitat as the *drame lyrique*, and sometimes even *tragédie lyrique*. (For the composers of this genre were serious in the choice of their subjects, as serious as those of the grand opera in fact, and in a sense a good deal more serious—and sincere.)

The lyric opera occupies the borderland of the two opposing operatic genres, and its existence was outwardly signalized by the institution of the Théâtre Lyrique, which became its permanent home. It combines within itself valuable qualities of both forms, serious and comic, without partaking of the excesses of either. It has the sincerity, the verve, the rhythmic vitality, the frank melodiousness of the *opéra comique* and a good deal of the realistic effect, the dramatic technique, the atmosphere, the pathos, the orchestral color, and some of the monumental grandeur, of the grand opera with little of its purposeless display and cheap trickery. And its style became more genuinely musical than that of either of the older types, for its composers for the best part drew their inspiration from deeper sources, from Mozart, from the Romantic school, from national music; and their training was not exclusively an operatic one—they were at home in symphonic realms and in the music of the church. In this they

LYRIC OPERA; EXOTICISM; LOCAL COLOR

were like the founders of the German Romantic opera: first and foremost musicians, not writers of opera. Like their German confrères they were the founders of a truly national art, for, native Frenchmen that they were (while their 'grand opera' colleagues were largely foreign), they gave to the world the first genuine French opera—if we except that of Rameau, who continued the work of the Italian Lully. Modern French composers are as deeply indebted to them as Wagner was indebted to Weber and the German romanticists.

With the peculiarly sensuous melody and the vivid harmonies that characterized the Lyric Opera there is associated the element of local and national color and, besides, a strongly exotic tendency, which became a sort of special culture in this new and vital soil. Local color had been no stranger either to the comique or grand opera, of course; but in the one it was a mere matter of dance rhythms, and in the other it was mere scenery deliberately introduced for effect. But the consistent use of racial idioms, of exotic harmonies, of national rhythms and melodic terms—sometimes throughout a whole work (as in *Carmen* for instance)—is a feature peculiar to the French lyric opera. While Italians and Germans in this age of reawakened national consciousness drank deeply at the well of their own native folk-song, the cosmopolitan Parisians were busily creating true and engaging pictures of foreign lands. Dr. Bie attributes this to the fact that their own 'climatic color' was the weakest. At any rate, in the dance salons of Paris 'people intoxicated themselves with the rhythms of Polish national music, the great *prime ballerine* excelled in their Cachuchas and Czardàs, the painters drank in the colors of the Orient, while poets roved into tropic climes and music found the sensuous charms of the exotic.' Now the most usual form of national expression is song and dance. Noth-

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ing is more welcome to the Frenchmen than these two forms of entertainment. Hence the Lyric Opera and its exotic atmosphere.

Félicien David was the pioneer in this field. He travelled far and wide, wrote a symphonic ode, *Le désert*, which was given in 1844 at the Conservatoire and thus caused the official 'sanctioning' of oriental music. To operatic literature he contributed *La Perle du Brésil* (1851), *Herculaneum* (1859) and *Lalla Rookh* (1862), all in similarly exotic idioms. Gounod and Thomas, the real founders of the lyric opera, are but mildly exotic, but Bizet, Reyer and Delibes, as well as their aftermath, Saint-Saëns and Massenet, abound in foreign color.

In spite of its many original features the lyric opera constituted no revolution. It retained the old operatic divisions though it disposed them more flexibly, knitted them more and more closely together. The recitatives were often as dry as they could be and the forms were if anything more simple and concise than those of the earlier opera. But the matter, the content, was vital and amenable to the influence of rising forces of Wagner and his dramatic gospel; it was a malleable metal to be forged into a modern frame.

The composers of the lyric opera abandoned the social comedy as well as the historical tragedy for the sake of texts whose outstanding feature was a glowingly exotic quality. The works of the greatest dramatists and novelists were made to do duty as bases for librettos, often to their serious detriment. Goethe and Shakespeare went under the knife for the benefit of Gounod and Thomas, Mérimée furnished material for Bizet; other writers of high literary standing were butchered to make many a Parisian holiday. The brutal disregard for artistic values shown by these librettists—Meilhac, Ludovic Halévy, Carré, Barbier, etc.—is not far from that of Scribe.

GOUNOD'S 'FAUST'

III

With *Faust*, Charles Gounod (1818-93) created the most successful as well as one of the two most popular operas of the entire school. But in no other did he approach the level of that work. Gounod was not a great composer, but an exceedingly important one. Withal, he is so sympathetic a figure that one is glad to have a lasting monument to his genius in the shape of one work at least. In technique and in form Gounod brought nothing new, but he did bring into opera a new personal temperament. He was, as Apthorp calls him, 'the great love poet of the French lyric stage in the nineteenth century.' 'Not particularly profound in feeling, but none the less genuine, well-nigh fanatical in his sincerity, he could mirror in his music all the dreamy ecstasy of a refined sensual passion—purely sensual, but thoroughly refined.' *

Sapho was Gounod's operatic début. It was not successful at the Opéra, because it suffered from lack of stage technique. *La Nonne sanglante* (1854) was not more fortunate. *Faust* was begun soon after, but interrupted because of a threatened competition, and *Le médecin malgré lui*, a comic opera after Molière's comedy, was composed in the interim. This work was performed in 1858. It was old-fashioned, in the style of the old *opera buffa*. Gounod was still downright reactionary. After *Faust* (1859) came *Philémon et Baucis* (Opéra, 1860), which had a text that was rather risqué for modern audiences; *La reine de Saba* (Opéra, 1862); *Mireille* (Théâtre Lyrique, 1864); *La Colombe* (Opéra Comique, 1866; earlier at Baden); and *Roméo et Juliette* (Théâtre Lyrique, 1867). Of these only *Faust*, *Roméo* and possibly *Mireille* are of importance to-day. The later works, *Cinq Mars* (Comique, 1877),

* W. F. Apthorp: *op cit.*

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Polyeucte (Opéra, 1878), and *Le tribut de Zamora* (1881), are inferior.

The text of *Faust* is a flagrant example of the vandalism to which we have referred. In Germany they prefer to call it *Margarethe*, out of respect for Goethe's memory! Indeed, it treats only the Gretchen episode of Goethe's *Faust* (Part I) and makes no pretense at preserving the spirit or significance of the great classic. It is a true story pure and simple, which the authors (Barbier and Carré) treated as effectively and made as 'German' as possible. Faust at the beginning is discovered buried in his tomes, an aged, *blasé* savant, disappointed with life. Mephistopheles, the devil incarnate, appears upon a summons uttered in desperation, and offers his wares with a sort of salesman's air: gold? fame? no, youth and love? Ah! the pact is closed and sealed with blood, but not till Faust has seen in vision the fair Margaret at her spinning wheel. He is enraptured—let us forth to meet her.

In Act II we first meet Valentine, her soldier brother, about to leave for the war, leaving her to the protection of God—and Siebel her young lover (whose female voice does not inspire us with confidence in his manly strength). It is the Kermesse. Faust and his fiendish friend mingle with the townsfolk, Mephistopheles entertains them with a song ('Rondo of the Golden Calf'), makes wine to flow from the wall of the inn, makes free with Margaret's name and houses Valentine's ire. The sign of the cross scares him off. Pretty waltzes, pastoral merry-making dispel the clouds, Margaret appears, Faust greets her, pretty confusion—more waltzes. Curtain.

Act III is the climax. We are before Margaret's house. Siebel brings a nosegay for his love; it withers from Mephistopheles' curse (uttered in Act II), and not even holy water revives it. Very pretty. Faust and Mephistopheles arrive with a casket of jewels. Margaret discovers them on her window sill, is tempted and breaks forth in rapturous coloratura of the Jewel waltz. This brings Martha, her companion, a querulous matron, to the scene. The latter is promptly drawn into a flirtation by Mephistopheles, who pretends to bring her news of the death of her absent husband. Faust meantime approaches Margaret, who yields reluctantly to his advances, and the four indulge in a delightful promenade *à deux*, suiting the purposes of all, including the composer—for it makes a charming quartet. The lovers separate. Mephistopheles effectually disposes of Siebel, still seeking Margaret.

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Now she and Faust join their voices in a passionate love duet. They part; he lingers; she, transported, sings a rhapsody of love 'to the stars' * * * Faust rushes to her arms—and the Devil laughs.

Act IV. Margaret is deserted. At the spinning wheel she mourns the loss of her lover. A short scene with Siebel reveals her state: she will seek heaven's aid for her child and self. Valentine returns, learns his sister's fate, meets Faust (with Mephistopheles) haunting Margaret's window. Valentine challenges Faust and is mortally wounded. Dying, he breaks out in brutal curses of his fallen sister. In the church scene which follows (or sometimes precedes) this, Margaret wrestles with the evil spirit appearing in the form of Mephistopheles and utters a desperate prayer. Act V brings the scene of the Walpurgis night on the Brocken, with the ballet (entirely extraneous to the action) interpolated for the sake of grand opera conventions. The prison scene, however, where Margaret, condemned for the murder of her child, is struggling, half demented, to a repentant death, is extremely powerful. Faust, with his usual aide arrives to deliver her; she resists, and, as her soul is borne aloft amid angelic choirs, Faust is dragged to perdition by Mephistopheles.

Out of this thoroughly feasible libretto Gounod made a wonderfully practicable, efficient opera. It is certainly one of the most *operatic* operas ever written—and also one of the most musical ones. It would not be difficult to trace out the purely 'operatic' or 'Parisian' material, against a great deal that is finely dramatic, nobly sincere, but all of it is full of music—that blossoming, sensuous melody, those swaying rhythms, those languorous harmonies that make up French lyricism. The lyricism which here has its beginning and whose over-ripe fruits we are still reaping in the school of Massenet. Let us forget the tragedy of Faust, the philosophy and the theory of it, and think only of the music.

The music is everywhere; even in Act I, the least significant perhaps, there are the invisible choruses, the refreshing 6/8 pastoral melodies with their vigor—

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ous pedal points, their open fifths, their reflective modulations, against the dark colors of Faust's soliloquy. There is the vision of Margaret with the enchanting motive that is to become the love duet of Act III. Act II is a panorama of colored scenes. The Kermesse choruses, the delicious waltzes, the graceful, adorable melody of the first meeting—another *leit-motif* Mephistopheles' rondo, the scene of the swords—a Fortunatus' horn filled with pleasant things, only outdone by what follows (Act III). Siebel's flower song is as naïvely charming musically as it is foolish dramatically; Faust's cavatina, much beloved of lyric tenors, is sweet and grateful, Margaret's ballade about the King in Thule with its modal coloring adds a flavor of Northern mystery. Now follows the Jewel aria, a *valse brillante*, sparkling as lightly within the throat of lyric prima donnas as the jewel chain without. The garden scene quartet is in the fixed style of operatic ensembles; musical unanimity with diversity of sentiment. Faust whispers his love upon a soft seventh chord, and gradually the most delicious melody of all—the love motive, that amorous upward turn softly echoed by the imitating orchestra as the voice sings it—arises from an atmosphere of sweet eroticism. Then comes the melody of the vision, the motives mingle, the tempo quickens, heightened passions lead to the famous 9/8 larghetto of Margaret's apostrophe—'the source of all the luscious melodies in 9/8 and 12/8 with which the scores of modern French composers abound'—brings the act to a rapturous close.

Act IV brings the famous but rather common soldiers' chorus, the rhythmic serenade of Mephistopheles, and the final dramatic duel terzetto and the vigorous ensemble finale, the only one in the opera.

The prison scene of Act V is remarkable for its motivistic recollections. The waltz, the melody of the meeting, the love duet, all the fine sentimental things

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that we have lived through pass through this musical kaleidoscope; the love motive itself becomes the motive of redemption. This last scene is the model for reminiscent last scenes, 'a musico-dramatic effect, than which none is more general and unassailed.' Dr. Bie calls it 'the heart of the lyric opera.'

Thus in 1859 was born an opera that had in it no really new elements, yet was of a totally new race. It was the first in the cycle of sentimental operas—which has not yet run its full course. The erotic theme as the central motive, directing with action and atmosphere, was after all its most notable feature. For this Gounod invented the idiom. For 'the dreamy languor of [his] love music, the cloying sweetness of the harmonies, the melting beauty of the orchestration all combined to produce an effect at that time entirely new to opera.'*

IV

Roméo et Juliette is dramatically less of a distortion of Shakespeare than *Faust* is of Goethe. Still, the same reasons that worked against *Faust's* unqualified acceptance in Germany, militate against *Roméo's* popularity in England. The French are less scrupulous in these matters, hence both are favorites, *Roméo* being almost as much admired as *Faust* and by some even more.

There are the conventional five acts. The opera opens with a prologue-overture, in which the chorus participates—a tame innovation. Act I is the ball at the Capulets' where the lovers first meet. The balcony scene forms Act II; the marriage in Friar Lawrence's cell, and the clashes between Montagues and Capulets in the streets of Verona, Mercutio's death and Romeo's banishment make up Act III. In the next there is the lovers' parting in Juliet's chambers, the scene with Capulet, intent upon Juliet's marriage to Paris, and the scene in which Juliet receives the sleeping potion from the

* W. S. Pratt: 'The History of Music.'

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hands of Friar Lawrence. The actual potion scene is not treated; the aria originally written for Juliet at this point is so conventional and trivial that it was almost from the beginning omitted, together with the short finale. After a brief Entr'acte and an orchestral intermezzo picturing Juliet's sleep we are, in Act V, shown the death scene in the Capulets' tomb, which is so altered that the two lovers may indulge in a finale duet—the triumph of opera over Shakespeare!

If dramatically *Roméo* is not as bad a travesty as *Faust*, it has musically much less that atones for its shortcomings. All that seemed spontaneous, even inspired there, has become formula here. The method is the same but the matter is lacking. There are waltzes and waltz songs (the score is obsessed with waltz rhythms) but whereas the beauty and grace of the melodies determine the quality of those in *Faust*, mere routine cannot save these in *Roméo* from their inherent triviality. The choruses are less spirited though perhaps equally well-made, the dash of the duel scene in *Faust* is but faintly suggested by the more elaborate one in *Roméo*; the love scene, still the climax of the opera, is trite and monotonous in comparison with its predecessor of *Faust*.

This love duet (Act IV) has nevertheless some beautiful passages and especially the orchestral introduction and postlude are beautiful in their vivid harmonic color, suggestive of Wagner. Of more uniform excellence is the duet of the balcony scene (end of Act II) with its tenderly swaying 6/8 movement over a long typical Gounod pedal at the end. All in all, *Roméo* is too conventional formally, too trivial in musical content, too straightforward in its technique. The church organist in Gounod too often shows his hand, there is too little 'composition,' too much unanimity in the parts, no harmonic daring nor broad lyric fancy. It would have been better for Gounod's reputation if *Roméo* had not been written.

THOMAS: 'MIGNON' AND 'HAMLET'

Faust was admitted to the realm of grand opera on March 3, 1869, when it was produced with the Walpurgis Night ballet added to make it 'eligible' for the Académie. *Roméo* experienced its first production in the same year.

V

In the meantime Gounod's first disciple (though his senior in years) had given two successful examples of the new lyric genre. This was Ambroise Thomas with his *Mignon*, produced at the Opéra Comique in 1866, and *Hamlet*, at the Académie in 1868. He already had behind him a long career in opera, *La double échelle*, in one act (1837), *Le Perruquier de la régence* (1838), *Le Panier fleuri* (1839), *Carline* (1840), *Angélique et Médor* (1843), *Mina* (1843), *Le caïd* (1849), *Songe d'une nuit d'été* (1850), and *Le Roman d'Elvire* (1860) had all been played at the Comique (only the first four and last three met with any success at all); *Le comte de Carmagnola* (1841), *Le guerilléro* (1842) and two ballets had been given at the Opéra. Most of these are fashioned upon Auber and Halévy models; Thomas' style was always an imitation of the prevailing fashion. Gounod's influence acted upon his plastic mind 'like a charm' (Streatfeild). His music has much of the sensuous charm of Gounod's but his ideas are less worthy, his artistic conscience less alive. Altogether he is cheaper and shows little concern for ideals.

Mignon was of course suggested by Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, but the connection is so flimsy that we must dismiss all thought of the German literary classic. In Barbier and Carré's libretto *Mignon* is the child of the Count of Cipriano, stolen in her infancy by gypsies. Wilhelm Meister, out of pity, buys her from the band and, after joining a troupe of strolling actors (whose head is Laertes), takes her with him, disguised as his page, to the castle of Rosenberg (where a performance

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of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is to be given). She falls in love with her benefactor, who meantime falls a victim to the actress Philine's coquetry. She escapes in her gypsy clothes, meets an old harper, Lothario (who afterwards turns out to be her father, who, bereft of reason, has gone a-wandering). Upon her wish, uttered in a fit of jealousy, that the castle might burn, Lothario, to show his devotion, brings her wish true by setting fire to it. Mignon herself is in the castle when the fire breaks out and is saved by Wilhelm. In the last act (the scene of which is laid in Italy) the mystery of Mignon and the harper is unravelled. There are two versions; in one Mignon dies, in the other she marries—as you will.

'There is a bad air in this opera,' says Dr. Bie, 'not the sensual atmosphere of Gounod, but the smell of gas and stale perfume and perspiration, in which a genuine coquette seems refreshing.' Another authority speaks of the 'plaintive charms' of *Mignon*, and says it reveals the hand of a sensitive and refined artist upon every page. 'Artisan' would be a better word perhaps. There is surely a lot of pretty melody in *Mignon*—one is still so popular that we can't even escape it to-day, especially in popular organ recitals.

There is a lot of 'color,' too; tunes, dances, a Styrian song, a 'Titania polonaise.' The 'serious' things are mostly trite and common, the frankly frivolous have at least the charm of frivolity—we wish he had remained so. Dramatically it is so bad a travesty of Shakespeare that in the poet's own country it is quite impossible. In Paris it is considered a masterpiece despite Barbier and Carré's absurd libretto.

In *Hamlet* Thomas is still more 'serious.' The character of the Danish prince is practicable operatically—it is the fatal irony of the grand opera hero. There are scenes, too, of the kind for which opera thirsts; the ghost scene, which Thomas has made quite powerful, and the mad scene of Ophelia, 'dramatically absurd but musically brilliant.' 'The candle glitter of the second Empire is in this opera,' says Bie, 'especially in

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the great death scene of Ophelia, which is the refined virtuosity of madness, idyllic fiendishness, dancing desperation, mundane opera gymnastics with exotic colors, beautiful ballad, humming voices of the chorus and blinking orchestra.' Then there are the grotesque grave-digger scene, the funeral scene, the trio of the Queen with Hamlet and Ophelia and the duet of the King and Queen. At the end Hamlet becomes king after killing Claudius. The triumph of opera once more.

VI

With Thomas the artistic barometer of the lyric opera has dropped almost to insignificance—only to rise to greater height than ever with Bizet. *Carmen* represents the apogee of the whole school; and it is the only successful rival of *Faust*. All that we have said of the lyric opera in general is specially true of Bizet; he is the pure musician *par excellence*, his symphonic works (3 symphonies, overtures, suites) are the real precursors of *Carmen*; he is possessed of an enormous musical imagination, a prodigious sense for rhythm and color, and he is fairly enamored of the exotic. He paints localities in blazing colors (even if they are not true) and his chief characters are gathered from the ends of the earth.

The first three operas don't count—*Docteur Miracle* won a prize set out by Offenbach in 1857 (Bizet took all the prizes in sight, including the Prix de Rome), *Don Procopio* was a 'Rossini child' sent home from Rome, and *La guzla de l'émir* lightly comic. But *Les Pécheurs de Perles*, still trivial, was a child of the Orient (Théâtre Lyrique, 1863), *La jolie fille de Perth* of Scotland (1867), *Djamileh* of Egypt (1872), and *Carmen* of Spain. Then there is *L'Arlésienne*, the heroine of Daudet's drama, for which he wrote incidental mu-

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sic. To us Bizet is the composer of *Carmen* and *L'Arlésienne*, for the latter in suite form still lends an irresistible charm to many a symphony concert.

The bold harmonic daring which Bizet first evinced in *La jolie fille de Perth* and more strikingly in *Djamileh* militated against the success of his work—people stigmatized it as Wagnerian! To-day we know better, yet even *Carmen* was not a success when it first appeared and Bizet's death shortly after its première has left a touch of tragedy upon his career—for what promise is there not in that meteoric score?—did Bizet ever reach his summit?

Prosper Mérimée's novel of the same name adapted by H. Meilhac and L. Halévy furnished the libretto for *Carmen*. The addition of the character of Micaela, the good peasant girl, as a contrast to that of Carmen, and also for the purpose of furnishing a motive for Don José's indecision, was a clever operatic expedient (a precedent for which is found in the utilization of Siebel as the second lover in *Faust*). Carmen is a beautiful Spanish gypsy girl, arch-coquette, cruelly passionate and fickle. At the opening of the opera, whose period is fixed at 1820, she is employed in a cigarette factory in Seville. Don José, a corporal in the regiment mounting guard in the square before the factory, is betrothed to Micaela, a simple peasant girl who is even now seeking him with a message from his mother. At the stroke of noon the cigarette girls pour out of the factory. Carmen is surrounded by numerous admirers, spurns them all and flirts with Don José. The latter is, however, inspired with resolutions of faithfulness upon reading his mother's letter delivered by Micaela. Suddenly a disturbance is caused by Carmen's wounding one of her companions in a quarrel. Don José is ordered by his captain, Zuniga, to arrest her; her passionate wiles overcome his sense of duty and as the act closes he allows her to escape.

Act II plays in a resort of a smuggler's band with whom Carmen is allied. While waiting for Don José, till then in prison for his delinquency, she is passing the time with Zuniga and other officers and incidentally Escamillo, the toreador, falls a victim to her charms. Frasquita and Mercedes, the gypsy leaders, also enlist her aid in a 'job' to be done that night. After a passionate scene with her new lover, Don José

Composers of the French Lyric Opera:

Gounod Thomas
Bizet



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is reminded of his duty by a bugle call of retreat: he wavers; she taunts him; ordered to leave by Zuniga, he refuses to yield to his rival and superior; a fight in which Carmen summons her gypsies to the side of José results in the disarming of Zuniga. Don José joins the outlaws.

In the next act Carmen transfers her affections to Escamillo; Don José the half-hearted is told to 'go back to his mother.' While he mounts guard over the smugglers' goods on the road, he encounters his toreador rival, they fight a duel with knives, and Escamillo's life is barely saved by Carmen's intervention. Micaela, who, frightened by a shot from Don José's carbine, had swooned, now comes forward and persuades her faithless lover to return to his dying mother. He yields and leaves with a threat for Carmen.

In Act IV he carries out his threat. Carmen in the company of Escamillo at the end of a brilliant procession leading him to the bull fight lingers behind in the square in front of the amphitheatre. Don José, mad with love and thirst for revenge, approaches her and once more implores her to be his. She scorns him, throws his ring at his feet and vows fidelity to Escamillo. As the latter emerges triumphant from the arena she attempts to join him but is stabbed to the heart by Don José.

The brutality, coarse passion and vice unadorned of the story are set down with the artisan-like matter-of-factness of the dramatic craftsman; no artistic delicacy, no spiritual deepening relieves it, the cheap sentimentality of Micaela, which affects Don José too, is no ennobling force. But none of that has worried Bizet; his genius soars above the literalness and conventionality of his librettists as Mozart's soared over the mediocrity of da Ponte. The figures live: their colors, their rhythmic consciousness, their environments, their motives have caught the musician's fancy; their passions become harmonic orgies, melodic sweeps, their spirits live in piquant rhythms, in dance and song. Nothing strikes us in a perusal of this treasure-house of a score with equal force as the conviction that Bizet is a musician of astounding genius. Every page is a triumph of the imagination—over convention,

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over sentimentality, over brutality, over cheap realism—over opera; not a conscious reaction against these things, mind you, but a lifting above the common sphere, a rarefaction through the sheer force of tonal poetry. The old forms are there unchanged, even attenuated, but the drama is not violated; thereby the characters stand out in bold relief, the scenes and the atmosphere are painted in a glowing light, not photographically just, but convincing, true as the colors of the *plein-air* impressionists. Only once has he made use of 'genuine' thematic material for his Spanish 'color'—the Habañera of Carmen in Act I—yet, even if his rhythms, his peculiar melodic twists and queer harmonic alterations were not Spanish, we would easily accept them as such against ethnologic evidence. Similar conviction is carried by the musical imagery for every *milieu*; we accept the rhythm of the smugglers for their language; the street boys' tune for their very own, the Gypsies' songs for theirs. It is the force of genius that convinces without arguments—theories abate, we forego technical discussion and gasp at the wonder of it all.

If we do not leave a performance of *Carmen* with a tune on our lips it is only because of an embarrassment of riches. The whole work teems with tunes, titillates with rhythm, glows with harmonic and orchestral color. A painting of all the notable things would constitute a complete table of contents. A short prelude is built out of the familiar Toreador's song with that wonderful incisive melody which is subjected to such ingenious harmonic changes throughout the operas; a brief development of an ominous motive against a darkly colored tremolo background first sounds the tragic note which becomes more insistent throughout the opera, and finally breaks through with terrible poignancy in an orchestral *tutti* in the last finale. The feast of rhythm begins with the opening scene, the

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soldiers chattering, Micaela's modest accents, Morales' flirtation, the pulsating rhythm of the street opening and closing the scene—a perfect picture, tightly framed. So are they all. A fanfare, the staccato tune of the piccolos, the street boys 'ta-ra-ta-ta,' the chorus of cigarette girls—all tonal images lightly knitted together by imitations that explain the action. Carmen's entrance, with a half frivolous, half diabolic motive (not unrelated to the 'tragic' *motif* mentioned above), leads to Habañera, an irresistible melody in descending chromatics—with a devil-may-care refrain. She laughs at Don José as she throws him a flower; he picks it up, the ominous motif gives the color of his thoughts. The following duet between Micaela and Don José reveals the other, the suave, sensuous side of Bizet—the lyricist of the Gounod-Thomas school, but more vivid, more interesting, and never banal. The scene of Carmen's arrest, first the chorus—sharp, incisive—then the rhythmically punctuated recitative characterizing Carmen's insolence, have more than a touch of realism. In a 'Seguidilla' with wonderfully piquant chromatic alterations and modulations, she accomplishes her seduction; a short finale consummates the action with a fresh melody (Bizet is prodigal with tunes), and Carmen laughs her triumph to the tune of the Habañera. It is all so formal, so dance-like, it might be *opéra comique*.

Don José's song, in the orchestra, opens Act II; the gypsy song fairly sparkles from Carmen's lips, becoming more and more excited as she dances; Frasquita and Mercédès (her two girl companions) join her as it accelerates to a wild climax. Escamillo's arrival is announced by *Vivats* behind the scenes; his Bolero march song, the refrain of which we already know, is perhaps the most stirring piece of the opera. Bizet's astounding skill as a harmonist and a polyphonist is hinted at in the short orchestral development of the Toreador motive which follows. The quintet of the three women

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and the two smugglers is a marvel of independent part writing, combination of rhythms, imitation, and polyphonic confusion with realistic effect. This finds a striking contrast in the unaccompanied song of Don José (behind the scenes). His duet with Carmen is one of the big things in the opera—the dances, the trumpet call, the two combined, his sentimental aria, her passionate disdain, the tragedy suggested by the orchestra are steps that lead to a tremendously dramatic climax: the clash with Zuniga, and Don José's desertion.

Act III. After an interlude redolent of the Southern sun we have the chorus of smugglers with enticing gypsy rhythms and surprising harmonic modernities, the Fortune-telling trio with Carmen's fatalistic death song, another ensemble of smugglers, then Micaela's aria with the beautiful violinistic melody. The two rivals clash, their duel is punctuated by the motive of the prelude, syncopated. Another ensemble climax brings the act to a dramatic close, with Escamillo's song mocking from the distance. The last act pictures the life of the plaza; chorus and orchestra make a realistic tumult; the toreador's march breaks forth in full blare, Escamillo and Carmen enter. A short lyrical love duet interrupts the confusion, the atmosphere suggests danger, Don José appears and raw passion breaks forth with all its cruelty. Murder and jubilation mingle their voices—and music gives it all a halo of divinity. We are moved beyond words, beyond the meaning of the drama. It is a marvel of pure art; the triumph of a musical soul.

Carmen is, at least outside of its native country, the most popular of all French operas. It is as brilliantly alive to-day as it ever was, and will be, for generations to come. It is, leaving Wagner aside, as far ahead of its own generation as *Freischütz* was of an earlier day. The two are somewhat analogous historically. They

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both represent the pinnacle of their schools—loosely, the Romantic schools of Germany and of France. Both thrust the banner of nationalism far aloft; both opened vistas of new and fertile fields. But while *Freischütz* stood at the beginning of its era, *Carmen* formed the climax and close of its school; indeed, it grew far beyond it. Halévy was Bizet's teacher, the traces of Auber's and of Gounod's hands are upon his work—but how far beyond them he did go! The torrent of Wagner was to come and wash away these formal tracts of lyric opera tradition, but Bizet's life continues to shine like a flaming beacon, and its rays play fitfully about the spirits of the new generation, down to Charpentier and beyond.

CHAPTER IX

WAGNER

The Wagner phenomenon; early essays *Die Feen* and *Liebesverbot*—*Rienzi*; *Der fliegende Holländer*—*Tannhäuser*—*Lohengrin*—*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*—*Tristan und Isolde*—*Der Ring des Nibelungen*; the drama—*Rheingold*; *Walküre*; *Siegfried*; *Götterdämmerung*—*Parsifal*.

I

THE apparition of Richard Wagner upon the horizon of opera has always been regarded in the nature of a phenomenon. He has not been viewed as an individual link in one of many chains of development, neither as the mere founder of a school, like Weber, nor the conclusion of a movement. He appears rather as a movement in himself, a colossus who spans the universe and grasps in his mighty fist a whole world of expression. Now that we are beginning to view his work from the angle of historical perspective, his figure loses much of its sheer abruptness, for he is as logical a development as Beethoven was before him; he can be explained by what went before; his relation to it becomes closer and closer. But if he seems less anomalous, less arbitrary, he is none the less great. If those that would exalt him as a deity no longer fall upon their faces in awe, those others who decried him as unworthy, a false priest of the divine muse, have also conceded his authority in the realm of pure art, and the great mass of humanity, to whom music appeals as the language of the heart, love him more deeply than ever before. For a generation he was decried

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by many, extravagantly worshipped by others, neither of whom understood him. To-day he is admired by all, because we do at least in a measure understand him.

But why has there been all this turbulent commotion, this wrangling, this splitting into camps, this upheaval of the entire artistic world about one single personality which is so easily explained? If he spun his musical web out of the threads of Beethoven and Weber, if he utilized the stage technique of Auber and Meyerbeer, if he looked to Gluck and Mozart, to Cherubini, Méhul and Spontini—even to Bellini—for models, and welded their elements into a new form of expression, was that too presumptuous an undertaking? Is the following of worthy and successful traditions a procedure so startling? No; the eternal clatter of arms is but an echo of the great conflict that was waged within the artist himself—a conflict of forces, feuds of centuries' standing being fought out within one artistic life. 'Wagner is the paradox of opera as experience,' says Bie. The paradox, that contradictory thing which has always lived by compromises and concessions—first to the dramatist, then to the musician, now to the singer, then to the orchestra, here to the poet, there to the mob—was to be molded afresh in the hands of one who knew no compromise, one who was dramatist and musician at once, poet in music, poet in words, and a stubborn doctrinaire to boot, a political hothead, a fierce contender seething with the fire of protest.

Wagner's life is in itself a drama, a continuation of that conflict. A student of language and philosophy enamored of the stage from early youth, a poet and dramatist, convinced at sixteen of the inadequacy of words, grasping toward music as a supplementary mode of expression, a moral and political libertarian held in the shackles of officialdom, a patriot exiled as a 'politically dangerous individual'; a composer

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abandoning success for the chimera of an artistic dream; an artist near starvation and suicide exalted in a day to the position of royal favor; the founder of an artistic Mecca, exalted by half the world as the saviour of the national drama, decried by the other half as a traitor and a charlatan. Through disappointments and griefs, through misery and conflicts lighted by flashes of supremest joy, the master worked; and one by one there appeared upon the firmament the stars of his creation, 'Flying Dutchman,' *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, *Meistersinger*, 'The Ring of the Nibelung,' and *Parsifal*.

To say that Wagner is the greatest master in the history of opera is to-day only a platitude; even the dictum of some that he is the greatest composer of all time no longer altogether shocks us. But to point out wherein lies his greatness; just *what* he brought to music and to the drama is difficult. For even as partisans we no longer accept his own doctrines without reserve; his discovery of the ideal musical declamation is seen to be only an individual expression after all, not a universal 'recipe'; the 'music of the future' is already a term of the past; the music drama, the unified work of art has not been invented by Wagner—not more than by Gluck or the Florentines. It would seem that art history works in circles, that ever and anon we pass the same point of departure, we are discovering the music drama over and over again, definitive as each discovery appears; and each time proceed promptly to abandon our ideal. Wagner's theories sound peculiarly like Gluck's, just as Gluck's were mere echoes of an earlier age. Opera started with an ideal which is unattainable; truth of expression, like all truth, is merely relative and the nearer we seem to approach it the more unattainable it appears.

But Wagner's position is nevertheless unique. Like Gluck he placed the demands of dramatic expression

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first, but unlike Gluck he was himself primarily a dramatist; like Gluck he made music subservient to the word, but unlike him he had at his disposal an art already developed to a point of highest absolute expressiveness, a subjective force rather than an objective formula. Gluck would not forget that he was a musician—Wagner would be a tone-poet rather than a composer; Gluck lives as a model of classic purity—and Wagner as the discoverer of a new world of tone, a dramatic symphonist rather than a musical dramatist. Such is the irony of art.

In one other point he is unique. He is the first great composer who, before he chose his medium, had the benefit of an all-round classical and literary education. With Mozart, Beethoven and the rest, the mastery of technical means preceded all else; subsequent cultural broadening could only influence their musical expression toward greater depth. Wagner *approached* music, so to speak, as a refuge, as a higher means of expression; and while for a time technical limitations may have hampered him in the attainment of his ideal, they also rendered him more ruthless toward conventions and established forms.

Like a discoverer of a new world he grasped the limitless potentialities of its resources, only partially utilized by its native inhabitants. With his superior education, his doctrinaire-reformist nature, he became didactic; as he went on creating, his theories took more definite form. But the discoverer in him rose to greater and greater heights and his imagination expanded beyond his vision, creation outstripped theory, and so—now that the doctrine lies battered and wounded,—the work of pure art, the land unwittingly discovered, the world of tonal beauty, the symphonic cosmos lives and shines out in wondrous splendor. The India of dramatic logic remains a myth, the America of rapturous sound is a reality.

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This conflict of theory and practice is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. As Bulthaupt says: 'It was a characteristic trait of Richard Wagner, that he conceived his idiosyncrasy, his genius, as law, because to him it was necessary and lawful, and thus in his theoretic writings he enunciated principles which, however much they meant to him, could not be valid to all the world.'* A brief abstract of these principles, as set down by Wagner in the third part of 'Opera and Drama,' is given by Bie as follows: 'He considers that the time has come for the individual melody of the Northern (he says 'German') language, which only accents root syllables, while the Romance languages are stressed arbitrarily. The Romance melody therefore casts its words into any sort of musical accents; the German, which remains true to its root feeling even in verse, must eventually develop its tone out of this rhythmic soul. In doing this it must direct its harmonic modulation only according to the emotional changes, which it follows with every bent of tonality, a mood-scaffolding under the melodic process of the words. Harmonic support of the melody can no longer be furnished by other voices, which in an ensemble are somehow stripped of their independence, but only by the orchestra, which must express *motivistically* the progress of musical circumstances. Thus there is no longer an "accident" in opera—all is artistic logic.' 'This,' says Bie, 'was one of the greatest discoveries in opera * * * and its truth will long be active.' 'But,' he says elsewhere, 'the truth of language in opera is but one truth, to which are opposed other truths, and hence this logic is but a theory.'

Thus theory. What actually happened is this: Wagner, the stage-struck youth,† his head full of Gluck

* *Die Dramaturgie der Oper*, II, 54.

† H. S. Chamberlain, in his 'Richard Wagner,' says that the composer almost literally grew up on the stage. His own father, though an official,

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and Latin authors, mythology, history and Shakespeare (he learned English just to be able to read him in the original), began to write tragedies on a colossal scale at twelve. Having heard Beethoven's *Egmont* music, he decides to write 'similar music' for his own tragedy and borrows Lapier's method of thoroughbass for a week(!). The study of music fascinates him and he writes a sonata, a quartet and an aria, soon after he produces overtures for full orchestras, 'compared to which Beethoven's "Ninth" should be a Pleyel sonata.' While studying philosophy and æsthetics at the university he masters counterpoint under Weinlig in six months and achieves his musical 'independence.' An overture and a symphony modelled on Beethoven and Mozart were the result, both being performed in the Gewandhaus and in Prague.

An opera text, *Die Hochzeit*, was quickly written; the weird passionateness of its text roused his sister's objections and he destroyed it, but a sextet from it, already composed, was admired by Weinlig. Chamberlain remarks that the fragment recently rediscovered already reveals Wagner's manner of treating musical phrases symphonically. Thus early began the strife for unity of form. The pronounced plastic nature of his motives is already apparent—his method of musical thinking in short expressive phrases appears as an inherent habit of mind.

In Würzburg, when he visited his brother in 1833, Wagner composed *Die Feen*, a three-act opera, the text of which he modelled upon Gozzi's fairy-tale, *La Donna Serpente*.* In speaking of the work in his autobio-

had been a stage enthusiast and had induced Ludwig Speyer, who afterwards became Wagner's stepfather, to become an actor. The family's circle of friends consisted almost wholly of stage folk. Wagner's uncle was a playwright and critic of note; his elder brother Albert (b. 1799) was an actor; three sisters, several cousins, etc., all followed stage careers.

* The résumé of the plot as given by Wagner (and translated by Streatfeild) is as follows:

'A fairy, who renounces immortality for the sake of a human lover,

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graphical sketch, Wagner says: 'Beethoven and Weber were my models; much in the ensembles was successful; especially the finale of the second act promised great effectiveness.' But the director of the Leipzig theatre rejected it after some hesitation and it was never performed during the master's lifetime.

'I was then twenty-one years of age,' he continues, 'and disposed to jollity and taking a happy view of life.

* * * I was done with the old mysticism and learned to love *matter*. Beauty of content, humor and wit seemed splendid things.' These things he found in French and Italian music; the Beethoven model was abandoned. 'His last symphony seemed to me the crown-stone of a great art epoch,' Wagner says significantly, 'beyond which none could achieve independence.' In this spirit he wrote *Das Liebesverbot*, an opera based on Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure' but 'modelled in the spirit of young Europe,' stripped of its serious moral side. 'Free, unconcealed sensuality was victorious by its own power over puritanical hypocrisy.'

Here begins the peculiar dualism of Wagner's creative sequence—pairs of works almost simultaneously produced and radically different in both ideals and method; on the one hand *Die Feen*, an outgrowth of Weberish romanticism in the spirit of fairy-tale fantasy; on the other *Das Liebesverbot*, an Italian opera of licentious and frivolous character. 'Rienzi' and 'Fly-

can only become a mortal through the fulfillment of certain hard conditions, the noncompliance wherewith on the part of her earthly swain threatens her with the direst penalties; her lover fails in the test, which consists in this, that, however evil and repulsive she may appear to him (in the metamorphosis which she has to undergo), he shall not reject her in his unbelief. In Gozzi's tale the fairy is turned into a snake; the remorseful lover frees her from the spell by kissing the snake, and thus wins her for his wife. I altered this *dénouement* by changing the fairy into a stone, and then releasing her from the spell by her lover's passionate song; while her lover, instead of being allowed to carry off his bride into his own country, is himself admitted by the Fairy King to the immortal bliss of Fairyland, together with his fairy wife.'

'DIE FEEN' AND 'DAS LIEBESVERBOT'

ing Dutchman'; *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*; *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*—the sequence of extremes persists to the end. Wagner himself remarks that 'if anyone should compare this score [*Das Liebesverbot*] with that of *Die Feen* he would find it difficult to understand how such a complete change in my tendencies could have been brought about in so short a time.' His admiration of Mme. Schroeder-Devrient as Romeo in Bellini's opera is hardly a sufficient explanation for the change, though her personality and art may be considered the only external influence that has ever been exercised upon Wagner's creative work. No, it is the first battle in the war of opposing forces which we have emphasized as the keynote of Wagner's career.

Das Liebesverbot was performed in 1836, when Wagner was conductor at Magdeburg. It was to be his 'benefit,' but turned out an artistic and financial disaster. The first performance was ruined by insufficient rehearsal, the second (Wagner's farewell night) foundered in a collision with a real-life domestic tragedy, fought out by the artists behind the scenes. When, much later, the opera was to be revised in a Wagner festival in Munich, it was found to be so absurdly licentious, and its music so naïvely Italian, that the singers could not suppress their mirth.

Yet Chamberlain finds in a close examination of the two works a poetic relationship. Redemption through love is the basic motive in both, as indeed, in nearly all of Wagner's dramas, from the 'Dutchman' to 'Parsifal.' Musically both works contain kernels of the master's later individuality. The overture to *Die Feen* is built out of the most important dramatic motives, and breathes the genuine spirit of Wagner; the introductions to Acts II and III contain moments of passion and traces of that 'inimitably noble expression which Wagner later uses for the portrayal of elevated maj-

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esty.' *Liebesverbot*, despite its Italianism, contains melodic premonitions of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. Beethoven, Weber and Marschner were the inspirational source of *Die Feen*; Bellini and Auber the principal ones of *Das Liebesverbot*.

II

Rienzi and 'The Flying Dutchman' were the next pair of irreconcilable contradictions. Wagner's frank confession of his purpose to out-Meyerbeer Meyerbeer would have justified us in treating *Rienzi* in the 'Grand Opera' chapter, but as a matter of convenience we include it here. The master's little confession about his disgust over the discovery at this time that he was about to 'make music à la Adam' gives us a little insight into the inward struggles of the artist. His regeneration was in progress but not till 'Flying Dutchman' was it complete. *Rienzi* is important chiefly because it was Wagner's education in operatic routine—the acquisition of a technique which even in learning he developed to its utmost degree.

It was Wagner's one and triumphant assault upon the Grand Opera in its ultimate form. *Rienzi* came shortly after the 'Huguenots'; it was composed during 1838-40, begun while Wagner, but twenty-five years of age, was conductor in Riga, and finished during a period of utter misery in Paris. It belongs to the 'Parisian galaxy' notwithstanding the fact that it burst upon the world, with all pomp and glory, from an unexpected quarter—Dresden. It is still recognized as the best of its kind—this work of a genius in his twenties. It established his reputation as *Robert* had established Meyerbeer's, but with what different results!

It was his only truly historical opera and the last to have a borrowed literary basis: Bulwer's novel,

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'Rienzi.' Wagner's success as librettist was no less remarkable than as a composer, for no less a judge than Meyerbeer himself pronounced the text 'the best he had ever seen.'

It is in fact the work of a dramatic genius—not a musician attempting an excursion into literary fields. Wagner's first artistic stirrings had, as we learn from his autobiography, been manifested in the dramatic field. His studies of Shakespeare and the Classics had not gone for naught. In *Rienzi* there is all the power of pathos, the tragedy of shattered ideals, the contrast of characters that go to make a stirring dramatic situation. The groups are well defined—Rienzi, the high-minded Roman plebeian of the fourteenth century, inspired with the mission of the nation's savior, a truly heroic figure, has rallied about him Baroncelli, Cecco del Vecchio and the mass of Roman citizens. Arrayed against him are Colonna and Orsini, both leaders of Patrician houses, and the Nobles. Between the two groups stands Adriano, Colonna's son, torn between filial loyalty and love for Rienzi's sister Irene, and Cardinal Raimondo, the papal legate, who, though at first in sympathy with Rienzi's cause, is swayed by his ecclesiastical connections.

The riotous and licentious nobles are about to abduct the beautiful Irene, and Orsini and Colonna with their respective followers are contending for her possession, when Adriano arrives and protects her. Rienzi appears and is acclaimed as the nobles leave the city to fight out their feud.

Adriano joins hands with Rienzi, and, encouraged by the Cardinal Rienzi undertakes the leadership of the people. The gates are closed against the nobles, the people arm, and Rienzi, refusing a King's crown, is at his own suggestion elected 'tribune.' In Act II he is receiving messages of peace from the nobles, apparently repentant; then Orsini and Colonna arrive with loyalty upon their lips but murder in their heart. A feast of peace is interrupted by Orsini's attempt upon the tribune's life, which is frustrated by the latter's foresight—

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having protected himself with breast plates. The nobles are condemned to death; Adriano, who had warned Rienzi, now pleads for them; Irene joins with him, and, yielding to the tribune's own entreaties, the people pardon their betrayers. The nobles take a fresh oath of fealty, but, more than ever inflamed with hatred, they escape. Rallying their supporters, they attack the city with armed forces.

In Act III Rienzi, at first reproached by the betrayed people, again arouses their patriotism and leads them to battle. Adriano again pleads for his father, but this time without avail, and while he is detained by Irene the sound of battle is heard. The citizens' army returns with dead bodies of Colonna and Orsini. Sinister clouds already darken the light of triumph. Baroncelli and Cecco, mourning the bloody sacrifice, deplore Rienzi's vacillation and begin to mistrust him. Rienzi's over-weening attitude toward the imperial authority (he has in a speech claimed for the Romans the right of electing the emperor) has stirred up the enmity of the court and of the Pope (now reconciled to the crown). Moreover Adriano, grief-stricken and mad with remorse, now vows blood-vengeance for his father.

In the next act the people are stirred up against Rienzi, and as he approaches the Lateran church for a great *Te Deum* of thanks, he is met by the sound of the monks' '*Vae victis*': the Cardinal bars the way with the ban of excommunication. All now turn from him but his own sister. In the last act she heroically rises to the character of 'the last Roman,' vows loyalty to her brother and rejects the entreaties of Adriano who, come on his errand of vengeance, yet wishes to save her. The last scene shows Rienzi and Irene upon a high balcony, and, finding the people deaf to the tribune's last plea, they perish in the flames kindled by the mob—while the nobles improve the opportunity for a fresh attack upon the populace.

The subject of *Rienzi* will be seen to have all the essential elements and potential effects of the Grand Opera—love and revenge, mercy and treason, religion and maledictions, crime and expiation. There are soldiers, processions, dances, festivals, mobs, firebrand and apotheoses. There is a ballet (though in Wagner's mind at least it had a dramatic *raison d'être*) and, as Dr. Bie adds, even a 'trouser rôle.' In other words,

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it is *opera* and nothing more, and hence should be treated as an opera—not a music drama.

Viewed in this light we cannot wonder at its subservience to traditions and old forms, its fondness for Spontini-Meyerbeer tricks, and its generally inflated but empty musical texture, its blatant brass and foolish Italian coloratura. Rather the amount of Wagnerian forebodings it contains should surprise us. Not the fact that there are so many *scenas*, trios, duets, arias, and ensembles, is the remarkable thing, but how closely these different sections are knit together, the length and variety of the individual numbers, and the potency of the musical effects, which not merely follow but project the dramatic action. And, most important, the degree of unity that has been achieved by the already copious use of leading motives. Such motives were not new to the Grand Opera, but no one had used them to the same extent and with the consistency of Wagner. Of course, they do not yet constitute a system as in Wagner's later works. Neither are they subjected to subtle changes according to the mood of the moment; but here they are—some of them with the assertiveness of an *idée fixe*, such as the battle hymn, '*Sancta Spirito, cavaliere!*' with which *Rienzi* rouses the populace to fight, and which echoes back to him even to the moment of his death.

The editor of the new Breitkopf and Härtel edition of Wagner's works counts thirty-five real motives in *Rienzi* each recurring a number of times. Many of them are full themes and melodies, which received their significance only from association, such as the famous Prayer or the Hymn of Liberty, but some already have the condensed mnemonic character of the later motifs: note the 'vow of vengeance,' the 'threat' motif, the 'atonement' theme, etc. Here undoubtedly we have the most notable advance over the established grand opera of the day—and the germ of Wag-

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ner's later manner. There are, moreover, many earmarks of that later eloquent style, the peculiar chromatic turns of melody, the restlessly shifting bass, the chromatic passing notes in contrary motion, the apoggiaturas, the enharmonic changes, the symphonic treatment of thematic material, the bold harmonic vagaries, and already a suggestion of the orchestral subtlety of the later master.

Besides the overture, which is still a constant quantity in symphonic programs, next to nothing in *Rienzi* has preserved an independent existence (excepting, perhaps, the Prayer), but the opera as a whole is as alive to-day as any of Meyerbeer, and more so, for it has at least as much musical content and is much more sincere. Herein lies one remarkable fact about Wagner's works: all of them (save the two youthful attempts which had no hearing or next to none) have lived. There is not the usual large proportion of chaff from which posterity has sorted the grain of most other masters' work. Even the weakest of his efforts has sufficient power for existence through succeeding generations.

The dreams of Parisian triumph and international fame were quickly dispelled after Wagner's arrival in the metropolis of opera. The chance of success was his chief urge to finish the score of *Rienzi*, but a veritable heat of creation spurred him on to the completion of *Der fliegende Holländer*.

The idea had come to him as early as the spring of 1838 while he was engaged on the book of *Rienzi*. Heine's version of the legend of the 'Flying Dutchman' was his first acquaintance with it. 'The subject charmed me and impressed itself indelibly upon my mind.' When in the summer of 1839 he undertook the journey from Pillau to London (on the way to Paris) in a small sailing vessel, the story repeated by

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the mariners in the midst of storms and the danger of shipwreck, took a peculiar form in his imagination. The coast of Norway, where the ship took refuge, made a deep impression upon him, with the weird magic of its scenery. In Paris, where he arrived in 1839, he submitted a sketch of the libretto to the director of the Opéra. But even Meyerbeer's influence could not secure him an order to compose the opera. He was actually asked to sell the projects for the use of a better-known(!) composer—Pierre L. Dietsch. He finally accepted 500 francs, rather than being cheated out of the plan altogether, and, living on the proceeds, promptly rewrote the poem for the German stage. In seven weeks the entire musical composition (save the orchestration) was finished. That was in 1841—just in the nick of time, for his means were just about exhausted. Soon after, *Rienzi* was accepted by the Dresden opera, and on the strength of its success the *Holländer* was performed a few weeks later, Jan. 2, 1843. Wagner's appointment as conductor of the Dresden Royal Opera followed.

‘With the “Dutchman” begins my career as *poet*, having left that of a maker of opera texts,’ says Wagner in the ‘Communication to My Friends.’ *Rienzi* was an *opera*, nothing more. Music, or rather *musical effects*, had determined the course of the drama. Now that he had ‘learned the language of music thoroughly’ he could be primarily the poet and ‘become musician again only in the final execution of the poem.’ This explains at once the contrast and the inner relation of these two works. The contrast is manifold: from a colossal, pompous stage-work to a simple compact drama, first conceived as a ballad and projected in one act; from the reality of history and practical intrigue to the mystery of myth; from the exotic atmosphere of mediæval Rome to the native romance of the Germanic North—a real homecoming, for he was never to

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leave either the field of legend * or the Germanic interpretation of his subjects (even if the *habitat* was not always German). 'Fool that I was I had believed it suitable only for Germany,' said the composer of the 'Flying Dutchman' after its refusal by Leipzig and Munich, 'for it touches chords which can vibrate only in German hearts.'

'The Flying Dutchman' is the dramatization of a ballad. The ballad sung by Senta, the captain's daughter, in Act II telling the weird fate of the wandering Jew of the ocean, is 'the concentrated image of the complete drama.' We give it here as translated by Mr. Ernest Newman.†

Yohoho! Yohohoho! Hohoho!
Saw ye the ship that rides the storm,
Blood-red the sails and black the mast?
Upon the deck a ghostly form
By day and night defies the blast
Hui the whistling wind! Yohohe!
Hui the whirling wind! Yohohe!
Like an arrow he flies without end, without rest!
Yet may the spectral seaman be saved from torment
eternal;
Find he a maiden faithful to death, an angel supernal.
Ah when, poor seaman, this maid wilt thou find her?
Pray ye that heaven soon
May in pity grant this boon.

II

Nor wind nor wave could say him nay,
When round a cape he once would sail;
A horrid oath he swore that day:
'In face of hell I will prevail'
Hui! And Satan heard, Yohohe!
Hui! and took his word, Yohohe!
Hui! and accursed now he sails o'er the sea without
aim, without rest!

* According to him legend 'has the advantage to comprehend only the purely human content of a time and nation, and to give this content an extremely pregnant and therefore quickly understandable form peculiar to itself.'

† In Breitkopf and Härtel's edition of Wagner's Complete Works.

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Yet did God's angel point the man a path to salvation,
Still may the curse be lifted, the sinner saved from damnation:
Ah when, poor seaman, this maid wilt thou find her? etc.

III

Each seventh year he quits the main
To seek on land the maiden kind:
Each seventh year hope dies again
For maiden true he cannot find
Hui!—Unfurl the sails! Yohohe!
Hui! the anchor weigh! Yohohe!
Hui! false the love, false the troth!
Back to sea without aim, without rest!

With extraordinary daring Wagner continues this legend. In Act I the Dutchman, at the end of one of his seven-year periods, comes ashore once more, broken in spirit and without hope of the promised redemption. Just before, Daland, the Norwegian captain, has anchored his ship off the same shore, having been driven from his homeward course. The steersman, entrusted with the watch, does not notice the arrival of the phantom vessel, but Daland, returning to deck, discovers the ship and its sombre master on the shore. He engages him in conversation and, being questioned, reveals the fact that he has a daughter—'a faithful child.' That is the Dutchman's cue. 'Make her my wife,' he cries. Daland is willing: the sight of riches in the Dutchman's hold has softened his heart. The wind has changed, they both set sail for Daland's home.

Act II. Senta, the naïve but morbidly sentimental girl, is seen amongst her companions, spinning in the captain's house. A portrait of the legendary seafarer upon the wall and the story of the 'hapless, pallid man' are obsessing her mind. At the end of the singing of the ballad she is overcome and vows to consecrate herself to the task of his redemption. Her companions are horror-stricken, and Eric, the young hunter to whom she is betrothed, is in despair. He relates a dream which foreshadows Senta's fate, but does not swerve her from her purpose.

Meantime Daland and his companions have reached port. The door opens and the Dutchman stands before Senta. Both are too filled with the emotion of the moment to speak. Left alone by Daland, Senta promises the Dutchman faithfulness unto death. Daland returns, gives his sanction and prepares for the usual home-coming festivities.

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These are in full swing in Act III. The crew of Daland's ship makes merry with the girls. The phantom ship lies in ghastly stillness. Its crew cannot be roused by the merry-makers. The girls are frightened, but the sailors become more and more boisterous. As they drink to their mysterious neighbors, the phantom ship becomes suddenly astir. The wind howls through the rigging, blue flames burst forth, and a ghastly 'Yohohoe!' breaks from the spectre crew. The frightened seamen disappear and all becomes silence again.

Senta now comes forth, followed by Eric, who once more passionately pleads with her. The Dutchman overhears them and breaks out in lament over his lost salvation. He wants to save Senta from the terrible fate of her predecessors; for eternal damnation befell those faithless ones who had plighted their troth to him before God—and this Senta has not yet done. Despite her pleadings he leaves the land. After revealing his identity as the Flying Dutchman, he is suddenly seen on board his vessel, which sails away in a gale. But Senta rushes to the edge of the cliff, and with the cry 'True unto death' she dashes into the sea. The redemption is accomplished; the vessel crashes into the sea and in an apotheosis the two lovers are seen to rise heavenward.

The intense romanticism of this drama will strike us at once. Hans Heiling, the Vampire and Undine—these are characters not unrelated to the 'Dutchman.' But what an idealism, what a poetic atmosphere surrounds this later work! And what a unity of spirit, what a compactness of dramatic form. Wagner had indeed become the poet; already the drama became the 'purpose of expression' though the music is still no more than the medium.* The music drama begins here. Except for this radical change of technique we might have classified the 'Dutchman' as a traditional Romantic opera, as we have considered *Rienzi* as a traditional 'Grand' opera.

Operatic forms were, however, not yet abandoned. The 'lyric need' in the 'Dutchman' is very strong. It is true that the divisions are no longer by 'pieces,' but by

* Cf. Wagner: Introduction to 'Opera and Drama.'

'The Flying Dutchman'

After a painting by Hermann Hendrick



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dramatic scenes; yet it is not difficult to pick out arias, duets, trios, etc., that are in perfect form. There is, for instance, the Steersman's Song in Act I, a fine folkish lyric, strong in accents and full of character. The Dutchman's entry is marked by a recitative and aria, developing into a free song form to which the crew sing a brief refrain. Then there is his duet with Daland; and the act ends with a sailors' chorus, though this consists of mere cries, Hoho's and Hallo's, rhythmic accompaniments of their work, quite logical dramatically. (What they *sing* is a repetition of the Steersman's Song, a quasi folk-song.) Again the famous Spinning Song of Act II, a wonderfully graceful piece, has a plastic folk-like contour; its motives are closely related to the Seaman's Song—but the rush of the waves has given way to the whirring of the wheels. The duet of Eric and Senta again is a regular tenor lyric, interspersed with bits of drama; and Eric's Dream is an old-fashioned operatic dream as we have known it from generation to generation. Daland becomes positively commonplace when in a *banale* aria he recommends the Dutchman to his daughter; and the Dutchman, after his long impressive silence, engages Senta in a real traditional duet with coloratura. It grows into a trio when Daland returns to announce the festival. In the sailors' songs, in the girls' chorus of the last act we feel real strength again, and the whole atmosphere, the contrast of simple ruggedness against the spookish and the weird, is masterful. Eric's importunities again smack of tradition, while Senta remains dramatic; and the Dutchman joins them in another three-part stretch of real 'opera.' The end, Senta's sacrifice, is dramatically free and is as magnificent musically as it is in its moral significance.

Thus we see that Wagner was still not free from tradition, but was constantly driven on by a real dramatic impulse toward his ultimate goal. The really

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important fact is that these formal components are 'organic'; not merely connected by dramatic cartilage so to speak, they are themselves dramatic bone. The degree of unity achieved in the 'Dutchman' was probably never before approached in opera. For this we have Wagner's own explanation. By his own testimony we find that he worked from the 'centre outward' as it were.

Senta's Ballad is the musical leaven of the whole work. 'In this piece I unconsciously laid down the thematic kernel of the whole opera. In the course of the final elaboration of the composition, the thematic image which I had conceived extended itself quite naturally over the whole drama like a complete network. Without particular design on my part, I had only to develop the thematic ideas contained in the ballad, each in its own direction; and all the principal moods of the poem automatically took shape in definite thematic form. I should have had to proceed obstinately and wilfully, as a mere operatic composer, had I tried to invent new and different motives for the same mood recurring in different scenes; and as I only sought to give the most intelligible representation possible of my subject and no longer a conglomeration of operatic *morceaux*, I did not feel the slightest inclination to do this.'

Is not here the secret of Wagner's later procedure? In Senta's ballad we have several definite ideas or moods thematically represented—the Dutchman, the redemption, the love of a faithful woman,—besides a number of subsidiary images—the mist of the sea, the aimless wandering of the hapless seaman, etc. These become the chief motives of the opera—*leit-motifs*—they are used symphonically, reiterated when the associated idea recurs, transformed, or merely hinted at. This is the symphony transferred to the drama.

Breitkopf's edition of the vocal score tabulates thirty *leit-motifs*, and it is notable that practically all of them

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occur in all the acts, and that most of them are in constant use from its beginning to end. This comes very near to the ultimate 'system'; and though Wagner had not yet promulgated his ideas, he evidently did by impulse what he later did deliberately.

Not the least important element of the 'Dutchman' is the orchestra as an integral dramatic ingredient. Here the composer strove not only for the most intimate connection between orchestra, voice and action, but also between the orchestra and the scenery. Weber had already established a precedent for this, but in the execution of the principle Wagner goes far beyond him. He 'desires to follow the processes behind the footlights measure for measure.' (Bulthaupt.) Thus every step of the Dutchman's coming ashore is accompanied by a definite chord, and his mental state accurately delineated as he progresses. In his meeting with Senta, too, his actions are minutely prescribed to coincide with the music, and as he approaches there occurs the first of these long, eloquent silences which Wagner has since made familiar to us. The orchestra, in short, becomes the protagonist—it speaks where words are inadequate.

The purely orchestral sections are powerful mood pictures. The mystery of the sea, the spectral atmosphere, the restless menace of the elements are contrasted with simple deep human emotions, not only in mere 'tone-painting,' but by subtle musical suggestions. The overture is a symphonic poem, woven about the most vital *motifs* of the drama, 'a piece of absolutely original character, without models, without progeny' Bulthaupt calls it. Wagner's personality is reflected in it with unwonted power and certainly as in nothing he had done before. Both the second and third acts have short orchestral preludes. Nothing new is contained in either, but the matter is always presented in the sharpest relief. As Bie says, 'he loves the per-

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sistent truth of expression and finds it only in the orchestra.'

The first performance of the 'Flying Dutchman' took place on January 2, 1843, under the composer's direction. Mme. Schroeder-Devrient was the first Senta.

III

Long before this, in fact before the rehearsals for *Rienzi* had begun, Wagner had made the first sketch of *Tannhäuser*. Both *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* existed, in the composer's mind at least, before any of his works (except the immature *Liebesverbot*) had been proved by performance. This, as Chamberlain points out, shows how Wagner's artistic progress was an *inner* process, which had nothing to do with the practical success of his works. Throughout his career we observe this remarkable dove-tail development. Before the score of one work is finished, one or two others are invariably being sketched, or their text prepared. Within two months of the première of the 'Dutchman,' the poem of *Tannhäuser* was completed. Its compositions went forward during 1844; in the spring of 1845 the score was finished and on Oct. 19th, 1845, it saw its first performance.

"The fog that covers sea and land in the "Flying Dutchman" is lifted in *Tannhäuser*. What Wagner tried and began there was finished here. The dualism of the German artistic genius is nowhere else in Wagner's works more distinctly expressed: body and soul; enjoyment and longing; hell and heaven;—in none has legend given him matter so intelligible, so deep and so *durchsättigt* by music; no other subject has he shaped and rounded with so sure an artist's hand.' * Here the poet has drawn his inspiration from the very depths of

* Bulthaupt: *Dramaturgie der Oper*, II, 82.

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the source of mediæval folk-lore. The legend of *Tannhäuser* (*Danhauser*) has lived in the mouth of the people since the darkest age—its source is quite unknown. In it live recollections of the Pagan faiths and their conflict with Christianity—a hard, relentless religion, whose moral rigidity had made pleasure sinful. Venus, the goddess of love, was represented to the naïve mediæval imagination as a she-devil who practised her wiles under the surface of the earth. Thus she was confused in the popular mind with the German '*Fru Holle*,' who, like the fallen goddess, practised the magic of love. In different parts of Germany 'hills of Venus'—unhallowed regions—came to be the dread of the virtuous. The hill of Hörsel in Thuringia was one of these '*Venusberge*' and the proximity of the Wartburg, the castle where the Minnesingers held their famous tournament of song in 1207, easily suggested the idea of the Minnesinger who of all wrote the most licentious love songs of the period, falling a victim to the evil passion. The fact that the historic Tannhäuser lived a half century or so after the famous tournament made no difference to early romancers. That event was a logical excuse to bring him to the dangerous neighborhood.

Now Wagner in a stroke of dramatic genius combined the tournament itself with the fate of the poet-knight, and thereby obtained the additional character of Elisabeth, the daughter of the Landgrave of Thuringia, as the embodiment of sacred virtue, whose love is a stronger positive motive to counteract the sinful passion.

In Act I Tannhäuser, still lingering in the arms of Venus, surrounded by her seductive minions, suddenly invokes the spirit of the Virgin (whose image appears to him in a vision). At once all the unholy splendor crumbles away and he finds himself alone once more on the earth's surface, in the midst of an idyllic landscape in the neighborhood of the Wartburg. A band of pilgrims passes, singing. Full of contrition, he seeks

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forgiveness by vowing to expiate his crime. The Landgrave of Thuringia, his patron, hunting with other minstrel knights, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide (both historical characters) among them, thus finds him. Only Wolfram's mention of Elisabeth's name induces the sinner to overcome his sense of remorse sufficiently to return to the castle with them.

There, in Act II, all is prepared for the tournament of song. Elisabeth, in an impassioned song, greets the hall she has shunned during the absence of her beloved knight. He appears with Wolfram and falls at her feet. Lords and Ladies arrive; the contest begins. The 'power of love' is the subject to be celebrated, and the hand of Elisabeth, it appears, is to be the prize. Wolfram, Walther and Biterolf in turn praise the virtues of love in chaste, ethical and valorous strains, each in turn interrupted by the ever more impatient Tannhäuser. Finally the passionate knight himself, carried away by recollections of the sinful orgies of the Venusberg, breaks forth in praise of the fatal goddess. The women rush out in terror and the knights press forward to avenge the sinful deed. Tannhäuser is saved only by the pleadings of Elisabeth, and, repentant, he resolves to bow to the Landgrave's will—to hasten to Rome and beg absolution. A band of young pilgrims pass below; with cries of 'To Rome,' he rushes from the hall to join them.

In Act III spring and summer have passed; autumn clothes the landscape of Act I in melancholy hues. The pining Elisabeth, praying at the shrine, watches for the pilgrims' return. They arrive, but without Tannhäuser. Broken and near death, Elisabeth bids farewell to Wolfram, who is also enamoured of her. Evening falls as Wolfram sings his sentimental appeal to the evening star. Tannhäuser, following in the pilgrims' wake, appears, disconsolate. Forgiveness has been denied him. Not till the staff in the pope's hand shall sprout and bear fresh leaves, will Heaven grant it—such is the pronouncement of the holy father. In a fury of despair Tannhäuser calls upon Venus, who appears to receive him again. About to rush to her arms, he is saved again by Wolfram's mention of Elisabeth's name. At its sound Venus and her sirens sink into the earth. A train with the corpse of Elisabeth is heard wending its way through the country. As it approaches, Tannhäuser falls lifeless upon her bier. But lo! a miracle has happened—a new company of pilgrims bring in the Staff of Peter, sprouting forth leaves: God has heard the sinner, his soul is saved.

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Aside from the ideal fitness of the subject, we must admire Wagner's extraordinarily powerful, concise and unified treatment of it, a treatment which does not derive its effectiveness from externals but from the inner meaning of the story. It is a spiritual and profoundly dramatic treatment. The tendency toward absolute unity, already apparent in the 'Dutchman,' is carried to further lengths in *Tannhäuser*. The word picture there made concrete in a short ballad is here abstracted from the spirit of the scenes, the crucial dramatic points. Simplicity, compactness, dramatic potency are the ideals for which the poet strives, this in spite of the fact that *Tannhäuser* is the dramatization of all existing opera types, an assemblage of all grateful effects. In Bie's words, 'The Venus ballet, the Venus song, chalumeau, pilgrims, return from the hunt, love duet, procession, song tournament, Finale horror, pilgrims again and again, Elisabeth's prayer, the evening star romance, Tannhäuser's narrative, his redemption—these are heirlooms of various sources of opera which Wagner, with all his admirable art, was able to unify and to deepen into a drama.' There is the same joining of the real and mythical, the fiendish and the naïvely virtuous, but added thereto is the splendor of the grand historical opera as first applied by Wagner in *Rienzi*.

But what a difference in treatment! Music, already in the 'Dutchman' the medium of the poet conscious of his musical power of expression, has now demonstrated its inexhaustible resources to the musician who 'aims at the highest art-form: the drama.'* Since music had in its 'absolute' existence been so tremendously developed the drama had, according to Wagner, 'to broaden itself' in order to be expressed by this broadened form of expression. And since music can express nothing special, incidental, external, but only the soul, the

* Wagner's Letter to Freiherr von Biedenfeld (Jan. 17, 1849).

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esoteric, the action had to become—not *richer*, but simpler and deeper. Thus the music drama, the simultaneous, unified expression of an emotional and spiritual development in word tones and actions is in progress. Never has the development of a creative genius been so continuous, so purposeful. More and more consciously he used the methods which first came intuitively. 'The Dutchman,' Wagner admitted, 'could be effective as *opera*.' In *Tannhäuser* he abandons the conventional *forms* to a greater extent than before and substitutes for it the *form* in its deeper symphonic sense, knitting the various parts of his drama together with related themes. These are no longer merely reiterated, but metamorphosed according to the changing mood of the poem. In short, form is determined only by the spirit; hence it is spontaneous—natural instead of arbitrary.

Wagner himself has written: 'Only gradually, in *Tannhäuser* and more decisively in *Lohengrin*, that is, according to the degree in which I gained a more and more distinct recognition of the nature of my subjects, and their appropriate manner of presentation, I withdrew wholly from the formal influence and conditioned the form of presentation more and more upon requirements and peculiarity of the matter and situation.'

No longer does Wagner indicate the sections of his scenes; few 'sections' are in fact recognizable as arias, recitatives or ensembles. There is but one duet, and the choruses are all of high dramatic significance, never without motive (as is the 'Spinning Song' in the 'Dutchman'). The principle of the new form, that of the 'word-tone drama,' is more nearly approached, namely: 'to concentrate the force of the action upon few, always important and decisive moments of the development; but in these few scenes, in each of which a decisive *mood* must prevail, the poet may linger long enough to exhaust the subject.' Such an exhaustive

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treatment we found in the second and third acts of *Tannhäuser*.

There is little necessity for detailed comment upon such well-known music as that of *Tannhäuser*. The overture, the last real Wagner 'overture' save that of *Meistersinger*, is a standard in concert repertoires. It reproduces the surging orgies of the Venusberg contrasted with the solemn measures of the Pilgrims' Chant, and interspersed with the fiery lyric strains of Tannhäuser's Venus song. In the original version the Pilgrims' Chant closed the composition, but in the so-called Paris version * the 'orchestral' orgies melt into the dramatic ones of the opening scene. Few things in music are more exciting than the music of this voluptuous scene, and more luring than the song of the Sirens; few things more dashing ecstasies than Tannhäuser's song to Venus, twice repeated, each time a semitone higher; and hardly anywhere is there so poignant a contrast as that of the sensuality of the Venusberg and the idyllic freshness of the pastoral scene which follows. The shepherd sings of 'Dame Holda,' a charming, naïve folk-air, and his chalumeau (represented by the English horn) plays trippingly about the pilgrims' solemn hymn. Tannhäuser, touched by the hallowed scene, pours out his whole soul in the descending chromatic second melody of the pilgrims; the horns of the Landgrave's hunt introduce a long ensemble scene of rather 'operatic' cast, and a conventional climax, followed by more horn-passages, ends the act.

The second act has many 'set' pieces: Elisabeth's air—a mere cavatina in disguise; the love duet, quite regular though beautiful, varied by Wolfram's disconsolate 'asides'; the famous march, spirited, festive and noble; Wolfram's song, a beautiful broad melody;

* The rearrangement of the work in conformity with the traditions of the Paris Opéra, preliminary to its presentation there March, 1861.

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Walther's and Biterolf's, each characteristic of the singer. So far little use has been made of *leit-motifs*. But now, as Tannhäuser vents his growing passion, the 'Venusberg' fairly shrieks out of the orchestra, each time he rises, till at last he breaks forth into the fiery strains of his Hymn to Venus. The big polyphonic finale of the outraged assembly is interrupted by Elisabeth's finely dramatic intercession. During the Landgrave's banishment of Tannhäuser the Pilgrims are suggested in the orchestra, but the Venusberg rhythm obstinately persists as accompaniment to the chorus, till finally the chorus of younger pilgrims is heard far away in the valley, to break forth in a short passage of joyful hope (while the orchestra is silent).

The introduction to Act III is a symphonic description of Tannhäuser's journey of expiation, built out of the Pilgrims' Hymn, the famous reiterated violin passages of the orchestra, and the lofty harmony (pre-figuring *Parsifal*) which has been called the 'motif of pardon.' Elisabeth's prayer, certainly one of the finest operatic prayers existing, and Wolfram's rather trite Song to the Evening Star are well known. Tannhäuser's entry to the sound of a sinister *motif* ('Damnation') ushers in the finest dramatic scene of the opera; one of those intense, concentrated, fateful scenes in which Wagner poured out the glowing lava of his dramatic genius. No dry recitative here, but eloquently musical declamation: Wolfram's recognition, Tannhäuser's question, Wolfram's 'Art thou not my foe?', the narrative of the Rome journey, the conjuring up of Venus, the cry 'Elisabeth' as climax—and all the while the orchestra paints a background in symphonic colors: 'damnation,' low rumbling in the strings; 'pardon' in the high wood-winds; the cello and low violins press on in anxious contrition; the Venusberg and its chromatic cataracts, its ringing joys, and suddenly the four trombones in solemn funeral chords. Tannhäuser dies to

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the sound of clarinets and bassoons; wood-winds usher in the returning young pilgrims; horns add color to the joyful chorus; full brass surrounded by an arabesque of strings, above the tutti of orchestra and chorus bring the most beautiful act of the opera to a most glorious close. Here is music, conscious of its noble style, a mixture of realistic expression and distant miracle, honest in spite of its virtuosity, schooled in a living spirit of tradition, woven into a soulfully animated play of harmonies and melodies, preserving even in ensemble singing its respect for the drama.

IV

Lohengrin followed *Tannhäuser* in something more than two years. Its completion is recorded in the summer of 1847, and its first performance took place under Liszt in Weimar in 1850. Not till 1860 in Vienna did Wagner, the exile, witness it, after *Tristan* and half of the 'Ring' had been written.

Again Wagner the dramatist has drawn upon the treasure of mediæval legend and romance—to the exploitation of which he definitely devoted himself after *Rienzi*. This time it is the great legendary cycle of the Grail and the Round Table, which appears in various forms in northern and southern France, among the Celtic-British and Iberian peoples, and which is the basis of the Middle High German poem of the thirteenth century entitled 'Lohengrin' and for a time erroneously ascribed to Wolfram von Eschenbach.

From these various sources Wagner pieced together his version of the story of the knight of the Grail who was sent by God to succor the princely maiden of Brabant in her distress. Wagner's Lohengrin is the son of Parsifal, the priest-king of the holy brotherhood, as we learn from his own lips. From a mysterious region, a peak beyond all profane things, he comes.

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There, in a hallowed temple, is kept the precious vessel, the Grail, which once held Christ's blood and which the angels gave into the keeping of a band of pure knights, consecrated to the service of humanity in distress and endowed with supernatural powers through the agency of the Grail. Every year a dove descends from heaven to renew its sacred potency.

Following the mediæval German poem, Wagner has fixed the period of the story in the reign of the Saxon King Henry I (the Fowler), who in the tenth century saved the empire from devastation by the Huns. The characters of Elsa, the orphaned princess of Brabant, and of Frederick of Telramund, the pretender, are of legendary origin. Frederick's malevolent wife, Ortrud, possessed of the powers of witchcraft, as well as the young duke Godfrey, Elsa's brother, whom she is accused of murdering, are Wagner's inventions. This circumstance undoubtedly strengthens the motive of the tragedy and gives Elsa's fervent prayer for assistance more logical force than the mere importunity of her suitors. But it also tends to an uninteresting division of the dramatic thread, while Telramund's foul attempt upon Lohengrin's life is an unfortunate disturbance of the psychological trend of the drama. Otherwise the big elements—the judgment of God, the love of Lohengrin and Elsa, the fatal question, and its consequence are broadly, simply laid out, and exhaustively executed.

In Act I, King Henry, the purpose of whose presence is to rally his Brabantian subjects to the defense of the Empire, inquires the cause of dissent among the nobles, and learns from Telramund of the decease of the late Duke, the disappearance of his only heir while in the keeping of his elder sister Elsa and the obvious guilt attaching to her. Telramund, her erstwhile suitor, having married Ortrud, of noble blood, accuses her of murder, and claims the succession as next of kin. Elsa is summoned, acts strangely and as in a revery recalls 'a knight in shining armour,' whom God has made to appear to her when in her dream. The king decrees a 'judgment of God' and after repeated summons there appears as Elsa's champion the unknown knight—in a boat drawn by a swan. He sues for Elsa's hand, she yields herself in gratitude, and solemnly promises to obey his ardent injunction: never to ask his name or origin. Telramund, challenged, is vanquished, but his life is magnanimously spared. Lohengrin is hailed as the sovereign of Brabant.

Act II reveals the perfidy of Ortrud and her vanquished husband, Telramund (spiritual descendants of Eglantine and

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Lysiart, cf. p. 200). In the darkness of night, in the courtyard of the castle, they plot to shake Elsa's confidence in her betrothed, to break his magic charm by wounding him, and thus redeem their 'honor.' Elsa appears on the balcony to soliloquize upon her happiness, is hypocritically applauded by Ortrud, who wins her pity and a place in the bridal procession of the morrow. Day dawns, life begins to stir, a herald announces Frederick's banishment and Lohengrin's protectorate—since he has refused the ducal decree, but accepted the leadership of the Brabantian knights in the coming campaign. Telramund finds four traitors to league with him and they plot the protector's downfall. Elsa's bridal procession is interrupted by Ortrud, who casts doubt upon Lohengrin's origin, and Telramund, who accuses him of deception. Elsa, troubled, is momentarily comforted, and, after she is again admonished by Lohengrin, the wedding train proceeds into the church.

In Act III, the lovers, united, are solemnly escorted to the nuptial chamber. Alone, they pour out their love in fond avowals. But Elsa, troubled by doubts and fears, becomes more and more insistent in her desire to know her husband's name; finally she asks the fatal question, and at that moment Telramund and his colleagues enter with drawn swords. The traitor is killed by Lohengrin and his body dispatched to the king's court. There Lohengrin will make himself known and take eternal farewell of his beloved. The final scene is as the first. The King has heard the circumstances and adjudged Lohengrin in the right. The revelation of the knight's identity as a servant of the Grail is heard with general astonishment; the swan-boat reappears, and Lohengrin, saying farewell, confides to Elsa a horn, a sword and a ring, for the brother who has so mysteriously disappeared—should he ever be restored. Then Ortrud steps forward: gloatingly she confesses that she herself bewitched the young duke and that the mysterious swan is no other than the boy in the bonds of magic. Lohengrin kneels down to pray, and lo! a dove descends from Heaven, the swan's chains are loosed, he dives into the river and reappears as Gottfried. As Lohengrin's boat disappears, drawn by the dove, Elsa swoons, and Ortrud creeps away to die.

Dramatically the plot of *Lohengrin* is about on a par with that of *Tannhäuser*. Again there is the inevitable duality; this time the mystical against the earthly. Wagner has derived his own language for the

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mystic element, a music of ethereal, lofty timbre, which is the idiom of Lohengrin, the other-worldly knight; Elsa and her love, her dreams, her feminine sentimentality still speak in the language of opera, but with ennobled accent. The solemnly heroic, the Germanically robust, which forms the atmosphere of half the opera is Wagner's own idiom, too—that idiom of 'fictitious truth,' which the composer works out with greater and greater plasticity down to *Siegfried*, just as the perfidious witchcraft of Ortrud preserves much of its quality down to Klingsor.

Musically, or musico-dramatically, *Lohengrin* is generally thought to form the last chapter of Wagner's development-period. It might in fact be called music drama; its advance over *Tannhäuser* is enormous. Thought of as standing between it and *Tristan* it is nearer to the latter. *Lohengrin* is the parting of the ways.

First the form: Not only are the formal divisions definitely abandoned, but the spiritual content is made the sole formal guide, the symphonic development of the themes (motifs, if you will) is consistent; the carrying of the mood decisively consigned to the orchestra, which is rarely used for mere accompaniment and which 'constantly communicates to the listener the unexpressed emotions of the characters' (Bulthaupt). The disposition of choruses and ensembles is entirely free and absolutely determined by the dramatic need. Second, the declamation: an unmistakable improvement here; hardly anywhere is it mere recitative, but every phrase is filled with its own poetic sense, and made characteristic of the speaker. The consecrated heroism of Lohengrin, the majestic dignity of the king, the naïve tenderness of Elsa, the malevolence of Ortrud, etc., all live in their musical phrases, which at the same time carry the momentary significance of their speech. Short ejaculations, like Ortrud's ironical

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‘Gott?’ the impressive emphasis of Lohengrin’s admonition not to question him, repeated a semitone higher, the touching confidence of Elsa’s ‘*Er soll mein Streiter sein*’—these are mere instances of what has now become a finished method.

The orchestra shows perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon. Its resources are markedly increased, the wind instruments are three each, a quartet of horns and another of three trombones and tuba; the bass clarinet and English horn are fixed quantities. The whole technique has become more sophisticated: instruments are grouped for special effects of color, the violins divided infinitesimally (four solo violins in the prelude), the strings are exploited for their individual color—the viola’s irony and the double basses’ menacing tremolo—woodwinds are oddly arranged to yield new blends. Woodwinds and harp give to Elsa’s dream its quality, muted horns and English horn paint magic, trumpet and horn alternate, any instrument is used for solo, impressionistic accents are given to trombone, flute or drum. In short, the palette has been multiplied, it can portray every variance of mood, every shade of suggestion.

Volumes might be written of the harmonic and melodic idiosyncrasies of *Lohengrin*, for it is here that Wagner demonstrates his technique for the first time in thoroughly developed and matured form. For details we refer the reader to the treatment of the subject in our ‘Narrative History’ (II, p. 410 f.). Here we may content ourselves with pointing to his marvellously beautiful use of dissonant progressions, and his ceaseless modulation, which, while it often disturbs all sense of tonality, never wearies the listener because it is most naturally directed by the melody, melody and harmony forming an insoluble band.

Returning to the question of symphonic treatment (which was to find its culminating point in *Tristan*),

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let us dwell for a moment on Wagner's use of the *leit-motif*, which occurs in *Lohengrin* with a degree of balance and control hardly ever surpassed. We are aware that Wagner was not the first to use this device; it is also easy to lay too much stress upon it as a factor in his 'reform.' Laymen have always been eager to grasp at every obvious association of these characteristic phrases and eagerly studied the labels which commentators have given them. In the hands of imitators the *leit-motif* has often become a stupid commentary of outward action, a label relentlessly pasted upon every figure anew at each appearance. Wagner has not done this. Neither Lohengrin nor Elsa, nor Ortrud, nor Telramund, nor the King have motifs which pursue them like a warrant. All that Lohengrin feels and accomplishes, all that surrounds him and belongs to him is, to be sure, plunged into the golden shimmer of the Grail melodies which we know from the prelude. But that is quite natural; it is the source at which his soul drinks, with which he is anointed and consecrated. This gleam never leaves him, but instead of congealing into a halo it undulates and changes constantly, showing the wealth of Wagner's melody in all its flexibility, in its altogether admirable expansiveness. Besides this Lohengrin is also designated by his own heroic musical figure, but the use of this, too, arises from deeper psychological laws. Elsa has seen her saviour in a magnetic sleep, and as she wishes to apprise the king and nobles of what has happened, the vision lives anew before her mind's eye. Here the orchestra steps in as the genuine interpreter of the heart. While the spoken language merely stammers, the orchestra conjures up the picture that is in Elsa's soul and builds upon the motif of Lohengrin the charming movement which represents her dream. And as Elsa, abandoned by all the world, awaits the champion, the orchestra suddenly intones the same glittering motif; it surges nearer and

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nearer, while on the Scheldt the swan with the magic boat draws near; and when the vessel with the silver armored stalwart has come quite near it blazes forth toward the land in fortissimo—an effect without equal.

All the other motifs are of similar potency and beauty. Before Elsa asks the fatal question, the motif of the injunction ('Mystery of the Name' in Lavignac *) once more raises its warning. Once before it has warned her: when Ortrud in the darkness of midnight has whispered her treacherous counsel. And as, while with her lordly spouse she trod the steps of the minster, happy yet distracted, and her eye fell upon the triumphant Ortrud, it roared mightily in the orchestra, in the sombre splendor of trumpets and trombones, as if the victory of hell were already won. One perceives that motives thus used can hardly be called 'leading motives' any longer. They serve as the explanation and classification of inner processes and are less dependent upon the person than upon the emotion (whoever experiences it) and its spiritual relation. Thus we might treat a number of themes, that of Elsa in its beautiful transformations (notably in the last scene, when it is clothed in doleful minor), the judgment of God, the machinations of Ortrud and Frederick, Elsa's doubt, etc., etc.—all appear under varying guises. What we have before us is a symphony in dramatic form.

A detailed analysis of that 'symphony' is out of the question here. Let us only remind the reader of a few pages of extraordinary beauty. Lohengrin's farewell to the swan, with its melodically suggested harmony; Elsa's recital of her vision; the king's prayer; Elsa's soliloquy; her admonition to Ortrud and their brief duet; the familiar bridal chorus; the love scene between Elsa and Lohengrin with its tragic close (a scene

* Albert Lavignac: 'The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner,' Eng. transl. N. Y., 1898.

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which in point of psychology stands upon the highest peak and which has no model in any of the famous and infamous scenes in which perennial questions between man and wife are exposed)—these are passages of such transcendent beauty that their mere mention conjures up memories of supreme enjoyment. The choral ensembles are worthy of particular note. Highly dramatic in crucial moments, they create naturalistic confusions, surprise, outraged emotion; they unite in harmonious pledges of fealty, in shouts of glory of such majestic breadth as opera never experienced before. The finales are still 'conscious of their form,' they are the last great attempt of the late German school at finale formation.

In closing, a word concerning the instrumental sections. Here Wagner abandons common usage: no overture but a prelude prepares the listener for the dominant mood of mystery. The bringing to earth of the Grail is the 'program' of this symphonic piece; with one single motive it pictures regions of ethereal beauty, in a play of shifting filmy lights, of rarest tints, with a climax of glowing splendor. The other acts likewise have their preludes, the second preparing an atmosphere of witchcraft and plotting malevolence; the third a festive celebration of Lohengrin's nuptials. Both the prelude and the introduction to the third act (the first of a whole dynasty of third act introductions) are integral pieces. Even in their absolute beauty they vie with the best we have in symphonic music.

V

The first sketch of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was composed immediately after the completion of the score of *Tannhäuser*, the tragedy to which it was to be the 'satyr-play.' Thus in point of first conception the

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work precedes all the others in Wagner's 'second period,' although its creation was not resumed till 1861 (in Paris), after *Lohengrin*, *Tristan* and much of the 'Ring' were composed. The poem was finished in 1862 and after the composition of the 'Ring' had been completed at the wish of King Ludwig, Wagner returned to Tribschen in Switzerland to write the score of the *Meistersinger*. It was completed, orchestration and all, Oct. 20, 1867. As a matter of fact it is difficult to adopt a chronology for these great works of Wagner's maturity, since in a sense they sprang simultaneously from the master's brain. Their ultimate completion, moreover, has little to do with the case, as that was undoubtedly largely influenced by outward circumstances. *Meistersinger* in its embryonic state at least, still belongs to the first period, and, more significantly, it is the only one of the later works which might be designated as an opera—it is the sublimation of the old opera world upon German soil.

But a veritable abyss separates this first dramatic sketch from the ultimate work. Real profound humor was already a quality of this incipient Hans Sachs and the showing-up of certain absurd public conditions was the principal dramatic purpose. Not the force of true humor, 'sublime, pain-stilling mirth,' but mere irony of external form was the subject of this poem. But since Wagner had now realized consciously what he had hitherto instinctively felt—that the ideal music drama should not express outer manifestation, but only the inner processes of the heart—he felt a revulsion against his subject which led him to abandon it. But when he had finished *Tristan* he conceived the character of Sachs in a new light. Within this symbol of the creative artist, the liberal, progressive mind, the foe of pedant and charlatan alike, there arose the sublimely noble nature of a magnanimous man, capable of renouncing his happiness for that of others:

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who, putting aside his own desires, feels deepest sympathy with the troubles of others. It is Hans Sachs' love for Eva and its resignation in favor of Walther, that now becomes the central point of the drama. Here was a subject worthy of the master's hand; he became the creator of a figure which for bigness and nobility will perhaps never be surpassed.

For the historic exposition of the 'mastersingers' and the 'singing school' we refer the reader to our Narrative History (Vol. I, p. 221ff). This historical background Wagner has portrayed with an idealistic fidelity. In the first act of the opera he stages a meeting of the masters' guild, an examination according to the laws of the 'tablature.' It is the eve of St. John's Day. The church (of which we view the interior from the rear, a part of the nave being visible) is filled with worshippers, singing very appropriately a Chorale of Baptism. In the foreground Walther von Stolzing, the young knight, who, having on the previous day fallen deeply in love with Eva, the daughter of Pogner, the goldsmith, expresses his feelings in impatient gestures, to which she responds from her pew. Presently the congregation streams out of the church, the lovers hasten toward each other and exchange hurried words, while Magdalene, Eva's nurse and confidante, is sent back to the pew again and again to fetch forgotten objects. From her the young noble learns that Eva is to be the prize at a public singing contest on the morrow. Her father, himself a 'mastersinger,' will bestow her on no other than a master—and the 'foremost' singer among them.

'Mastersinger,' 'song trial'—these are strange ideas to Walther; so David, the apprentice of Hans Sachs, the cobbler, who is even now directing the preparations for the master's meeting, is requested by Magdalene (his sweetheart) to 'instruct' the knight. From David, filled with a great sense of his own importance, Walther learns that being a 'mastersinger' means being a 'poet' and a 'singer' (after having passed the grades of 'school friend' and 'scholar'); that at a 'trial sing' one must compose and execute a song according to strictest rule; and that to know the 'tablature' and the various species of song is a science in itself. Walther, amused at the whole proceeding, made the more comical by the naively officious but good-natured apprentice, despairs of achieving the rank which alone can win him the coveted prize.

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The meeting of the masters begins. The roll-call by Kothner, the president, introduces us to all the mastersingers, including Pogner, the wealthy goldsmith (Eva's father), Hans Sachs, the cobbler, and Sixtus Beckmesser, the town-clerk (also incumbent of the official position of 'Merker' or judge in the singing trials). Pogner in an address tells of his plan for a public contest of the masters, of which his daughter shall be the prize—with this proviso, however: that she herself shall approve the choice. Beckmesser, the narrow pedant, testy and suspicious, fearing for his chances in such a case, protests against this 'dangerous' interference with the masters' judgment; Sachs, the liberal, on the contrary, desires to let *all* the people be the judge. Pogner's condition stands. The latter, who has before the meeting learned Walther's desire to become a mastersinger, now introduces the young knight to the assembly. Beckmesser is at once suspicious; we have cause to fear that his judgment as 'Merker' is likely to be biased. The trial of Walther proceeds and turns out quite naturally: the knight has failed ignominiously—by the masters' rule. Only Sachs, the keen judge, the true artist, discovers marks of genius. But his argument is of no avail; the form is held higher than the spirit. As the masters hurry off in utter confusion, to which is added the merriment of the apprentices, he alone remains behind, in rapt speculation.

Act II shows us the streets of Nürnberg—Pogner's house at the right, Sachs' at the left. The apprentices make sport of David and tease him about Magdalene, who is scouting in Eva's behalf for news of Walther's fate. Since he has failed, David gets none of the goodies which she has brought. Sachs comes home as evening falls and the window shutters are being closed; he chides his apprentice and enters the house. Pogner and Eva return from a promenade; the midsummer evening spreads its delicious perfume as they speak of the events of the following day. Eva is eager for news; Magdalene inspires fear of failure. But here is Hans Sachs—him she will question. The cobbler has brought his work bench out before the door; he will enjoy the evening air while finishing Master Beckmesser's shoes. A touching soliloquy, as he inhales the fragrance of the lilac bush, apprises us of his state of mind: 'cob-
bler, stick to your last, when there are such as he that sang to-day,' he muses in effect; when Eva interrupts and shyly approaches the subject near to her heart. Presently she learns the worst—not even the comfort of Sachs' sympathy seems vouchsafed to her. But his true attitude we gather from the

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few words, as Eva excitedly hurries off: '*Das dacht ich wohl, Nun heisst's: schaff Rath*' ('I thought as much. My council is needed'). But when the young knight appears and, after urging his love in the shadow of a spreading tree, attempts to fly with the maiden, Sachs foils them by casting a glare of light across the lane. They retire to the shadow of the tree.

Next comes the ludicrous scene in which Beckmesser, lute in hand, tries to serenade Eva, and Sachs takes delicious revenge for the marker's 'professional' taunts, levelled at the cobbler during the meeting. He hammers and sings as merrily as possible, and finally agrees to quit only on condition that he may 'mark' the 'mistakes' of Beckmesser's serenade with hammer-strokes—according to his own interpretation of the rules, of course. He drives the old pedant to distraction and the result is dryly expressed by the cobbler when he finally tells him, 'the shoes are done!' To cap the joke we are made aware that not Eva, but Magdalene in disguise has been the recipient of his avowals, while Eva herself has been carrying on a sweet *tête-à-tête* with her knight in the shadow of the tree. But David has recognized his love, and mistaking Beckmesser's intentions, promptly falls upon him with fury. This rouses the neighbors and a dreadful fight ensues between the burghers who stream upon the scene in large numbers. Suddenly the horn of the night-watchman is heard, the mob disperses, Beckmesser limps away painfully after his merciless beating, David is sent to bed with threats of punishment, Walther, too, is hurried into the cobbler's house, and the scene is as quiet as before. The watchman sleepily rubs his eyes and wonders. He blows his horn and sings his call, and slowly disappears down the narrow, tortuous lane, as the curtain falls.

Act III shows the most radiant of sunny mornings in the interior of Sachs' home. The cobbler is lost in deep cogitation, poring over books of ancient lore. So preoccupied is he that he does not even notice David's entrance, the 'prentice whom he has forgotten to punish for the doings of the night before. David enters in festive array, with a basket filled with good things from his sweetheart. He has forgotten, too, that it is his 'name day' (St. John's day, his name being Johannes, or 'Hans'); and David, reminded of it by his 'piece' about St. John, which Sachs makes him rehearse, touchingly offers him of his bounty by way of good wishes. The master thanks him and soon is lost in the profound soliloquy on the strange happenings of the night, interrupted only by the entrance of Walther, who has spent the night under Sachs' roof. In the ensuing con-

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versation Sachs makes the despairing, impulsive youth see reason, and actually teaches him the art of composition according to the masters' standard. Walther composes his prize song, which recounts his dream of the night just passed, while Sachs commits it to paper.

After he leaves, filled with new hope, to prepare for the festival, Beckmesser enters limping, and, finding the room deserted, looks about. In a scene of grotesque pantomime he discovers Sachs' manuscript of Walther's song, and, thinking that it is Sachs' own, he hides it in his pocket. Sachs appears and, cross-examined as to his own intentions in connection with the contest, he denies the implication that he himself, the widower, will sue for the hand of Eva. Confronted with the 'evidence' he magnanimously presents the prize song to his self-imagined competitor, who in his joy over the thought of having in his possession a song of the famous Sachs, and confident that by its means he will win the prize, forgives all 'by-gones' and hurries away reconciled.

Eva is the next to appear. She pretends to have trouble with her new shoes, but suddenly, as Walther appears on the threshold, she utters a cry and so dispels all doubt in Sachs' mind as to 'where the shoe pinches.' While he busies himself, the two lovers raptly contemplate each other and Walther breaks into the melody of his newly composed song. Eva is overcome; in a most touching passage she utters her gratitude, and Sachs' noble thoughts are once more revealed to us. Magdalene and David have in the meantime entered and, in the greatest of all quintets, the new song is, according to Meistersinger custom, duly christened the 'Melody of the Blessed Morning Dream.' All go forth to the festival, upon which the curtain now rises after a brief orchestral interlude.

On the banks of the Pegnitz the guilds arrive, each with their characteristic songs. Men and girls dance and make merry till the scene is filled with the populace. Last of all arrive the mastersingers and Eva with them. The contest opens with Beckmesser and his utterly ludicrous failure to interpret the supposed song of Sachs. He accuses him in bitter invective of treachery and Sachs explains publicly. He introduces Walther, who is promptly granted a hearing, with the natural result: wild enthusiasm and approval. Offered the master's insignia, he politely refuses, but is promptly re-proved for his snobbery by Sachs in an exalted address:

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With deepest respect Walther now accepts the honor as well as the prize. General merriment, and the crowning of Sachs by Eva, close this veritable apotheosis to German art.

This, in outline, is the action of what has been called the most German of all German dramas. Nothing since *Der Freischütz* has appealed so potently to the deepest sentiment of the German people. It is the noblest interpretation of German genius that we have. Every page glows with the fervor of an exalted and broad patriotism, a patriotism that not only upholds the best but ridicules the worst—the narrow pedantry, the hide-bound bigotry which is the by-product of a naturally philosophical and methodical people. This has been interpreted as a satire upon Wagner's critics, and in truth it holds up to scorn the very arguments that have been levelled against Wagner. But nothing so narrow as a personal grievance can be read into a work so genuinely inspired. The fanatical conservatism of Beckmesser is the perennial and universal quality of a certain class of pedants the world over; he is as universal a character as Polonius or Monsieur Jourdain, for instance. On the other hand, Hans Sachs, whom we may accept as the master-spokesman, expounds a philosophy of art, an artistic creed which must appeal to us as the most liberal, moderate, enlightened and sympathetic utterance that has ever been addressed by an artist to a people. If, in spite of this nationalistic element, *Meistersinger* is universal in its appeal, it is due to its profoundly human quality. The nobly human character of Hans Sachs is after all its leading theme, the *idée fixe* of the mighty symphony. Thus the poet of to-day reaches back across the centuries to his early spiritual ancestor and in one sweep of the imagination pays a matchless tribute not only to his genius but to the genius and character of the race of which he is made the symbol.

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A symphony we have called it, and a symphony it is—a great symphony in C major with fifty themes or more, rambling through all the gamut of keys with marvellous flexibility, but coming down firmly on its two feet, the tonic and dominant of C. It would be both useless and presumptuous to attempt an analysis of it in less than a volume, for the musical elaboration, the prismatic diffusion of the musical substance is as bewildering as the multiplicity of dramatic detail, which has been made apparent by the extraordinary length of even our cursory review. We can only indicate a few general qualities.

First there is the notably diatonic character of the score; this is the more remarkable after the chromaticism of *Lohengrin* and *Tristan*; but perfectly natural and appropriate to the subject. Instead of a resultant monotony we have a more infinite variety than ever, induced by a new mastery of modulation, a rhythmic interest not previously known in Wagner, and a polyphonic technique which has been equalled only by the greatest masters in music. This in itself is the second great general quality of the work. The aspect of the score is positively learned at times, the combination of themes ingenious in the highest degree (a notable example being the end of the last act when the prize song, the banner motif and the Meistersinger theme are all used simultaneously) yet nothing more spontaneous was ever conceived. These are not the lucubrations of a musical pundit, but the flowering of a marvellous multiplicitous mind, the result of a process of emotional thinking—if there is such a thing—of which the ordinary human has no conception.

All we have said about *Lohengrin* with regard to Wagner's formal development and the use of the *leit-motif* is doubly true of *Meistersinger*. The treatment is more symphonic than ever, the musical sequence, an old device being made much of here, but in a new and

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extremely spontaneous manner. The form is more unified, less 'formal' in the old sense, and the thematic references more subtle, the spiritual significance of the musical phrase more profound. We shall take one instance of this only; the idea of Sachs' renunciation of love, which runs like a melancholy undercurrent through all the merriment and triumph of the action. Sachs' unquenchable good humor, his generosity and wisdom are adequately manifested by his words; but how except in music could this deep sentiment, which Sachs himself is careful not to betray, be expressed? Here the poet *had* to be a musician, as Chamberlain says. Only once we hear him soliloquize softly:

*'Von den Kinde lieblich hehr
möcht ich gern wohl singen . . .'*

Otherwise only by Eva's words and Sachs' humorous rejoinder do we see a suggestion of sentimental attachment. But how eloquently the musical phrase bares the heart of this hero. Already when Sachs defends Walther in Act I the orchestra breathes a suggestive sigh. In Act II, as he speaks with Eva in the cool of the summer evening, the phrase becomes more persistent. Then, while Sachs bawls out his cobbler's song to spite Beckmesser, we first hear the marvellously eloquent motif of 'renunciation':



We are gradually filled with a sense of the man's nobility; through all the second act with its deliciously '*stimmungsvoll*' close our heart has gone out to him. Now the introduction to Act III makes that renunciation its leading theme, announced by the cellos, *con espressione*, treated canonically, and, after being interrupted by Sachs' Reformation Hymn, reiterated with all its beauty and breadth by the full orchestra. Throughout Sachs' meditation in the first scene of Act

Facsimile of Wagner's Manuscript: a Page from the Score of
'Die Meistersinger'

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, written vertically along the left margin.

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III, and during his soliloquy this theme conveys to us his innermost feeling: the sorrow manfully fought down. As Walther composes his prize song, we hear it at the end of each 'bar,' as if to indicate the sealing of the master's fate. At Beckmesser's entrance, the town clerk's own crabbed *motif* is contrasted with it, and as he discovers the prize song manuscript we hear one more faint recurrence, quickly dispelled by the prize song melody as Beckmesser reads the script. But when Eva, overflowing with gratitude, sings her '*O Sachs, mein Freund*,' the clarinet sings the lovely melody as counterpoint. When in the last scene the people acclaim their idol, their 'Hail' dies out to the sound of our theme, while Sachs in touching confusion searches for words. Again, during Beckmesser's hopeless performance, at the end of the people's second acclaim, and finally as Sachs accomplishes his noble deed—the uniting of two young hearts—the violins sing it softly for the last time, anticipating the words of Sachs:

'Den Sänger wählt ich gut . . .'

The fight is won; the great man turns for comfort to his art: into his great defense of the masters, his patriotic appeal to Walther, he pours the depth of his emotion. We glory in the outcome; we are deeply moved, but our tears are tears of joy.

Thus we might follow the fortunes of all the themes—fifty or more; the stately Meistersinger *motif*, with its transformations, combinations and its caricatures; the knightly rhythmic one of Walther; the lovely one for Eva; the dreamy midsummer's night, the festive gladness of St. John's Day, and so on. But nothing but a study of the score will ever lead the reader to an adequate appreciation of the work. He will, upon a first hearing, be struck with the great plasticity of the scenes and the musical expression with the extraordinarily vivid characterization of the figures. Even without

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watching he will never be in doubt as to who is speaking, whether he understands the words or not—be it the knight and the 'prentice, Sachs and Beckmesser, Eva and Magdalene, the characters are set off against each other with a melodic physiognomy that is unmistakable. He will also revel in the melodious spontaneity and harmonic strength of the more formal portions of the music: Walther's inspired '*Am stillen Herd*'; the passionate trial song '*Fanget an*'; Sachs' monologue under the lilac bush; the 'Prize Song,' the marvellously beautiful quintet; the dance of the apprentices; the waltz, with its lovely counter melodies; the Reformation Hymn '*Wacht auf*'—a chorus without equal as a realistic expression of folk-spirit. Then there is the masterly symphonic Prelude, summoning new and unheard-of sonorities and instrumental polyphonies; and the introduction to Act III, already mentioned above, which will at once grip him, if the audience will allow it to be heard properly. The ensemble, the realistic confusion of the trial scene, a work of art which Dr. Bie 'shudders to call a finale'; the beating scene with its eighteen-part tumult, and all the choruses of 'folkish' flavor—all these are too great to dismiss with a word.

In a way these things preserve the traditions of opera, but, aside from the fact that they are vastly greater in inspiration and execution than anything that went before, there is this difference: most of these 'pieces' are dramatically logical in their formality. Just as it is not only justifiable but necessary that Orpheus should actually sing on the stage, so it is necessary for Walther to sing, and to sing in regular form; so, too, that the chorus should break forth in a formal chorale, that Sachs should pour out his musings, David say his piece, the guilds sing their songs *in form*. They are all happy in their songs and never do we begrudge their happiness or criticize them for it. The truth is that we ourselves are happy; no other opera—perhaps no other

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stage work—makes us so, in such a degree. Those who cannot feel with us must be unassailable in their stolidity.

VI

If, as we have pointed out, *Meistersinger* bears a close relation, in substance and form, to *Tannhäuser*, a similar connection may be established between *Tristan und Isolde* and *Lohengrin*. In *Lohengrin* the drama (the veritable music-drama, in which music serves as the chief means of expression and serves to interpret the inner meaning of the action, and the psychological processes of the characters) was the ideal—though still but partially conscious—of the author. The symphonic treatment of the orchestra, the development of a new form of melody accurately interpretive of the moment, yet essentially lyrical, were to be noted, and the action, reduced to as few scenes as possible, aimed to develop their dramatic substance to the utmost in order to bare the underlying motives.

In *Tristan und Isolde*, the first work completed in his 'second period,' Wagner has carried out these aims with full consciousness and extreme deliberation. Ten years of meditation, of critical and theoretical work, intervene between the two works—years in which 'Art and Revolution,' 'The Art Work of the Future,' 'Opera and Drama' and the 'Two Letters' were published. These labors could not be without influence upon the master's own creative work. He himself stated that he had taken a greater step here than that which lay between *Die Feen* and *Tannhäuser*. And hence the world has come to look upon *Tristan* as the true 'reform' work of Wagner's career, since in the master's own words he 'permitted to be made upon it the strictest demands emanating from his theoretical assertions.' But it must not be inferred that Wagner deliberately

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formed *Tristan* in accordance with definite rule. He moved with the utmost freedom and totally without regard to any theoretical consideration. Nevertheless he was spiritually compelled to construct the work after his own 'system,' and in so doing he soared far beyond it.

Not a merely technical advance lifts *Tristan* into a class apart from its predecessors, but the conscious realization of the law that only the 'purely human' can be the subject of the music drama. Now in *Lohengrin* the inner process of Elsa's heart is revealed only by the coöperation of complicated outward circumstances (Chamberlain points to the end of Act II as an instance). In *Tristan*, on the other hand, the matter is so arranged that the greatest part of the poem is devoted to the demonstration of the inner motives of the action. Love is the central point of the action in *Tristan*, it furnishes all the motives. To reveal this exalted passion in all its phases and workings, is the poet's chief business. He dwells upon it on all occasions, even to the detriment of dramatic progression. What words cannot convey he summons a veritable magic of sound to tell us; till at the end we are overwhelmed with the infinite power of this love as with the fatality of a superhuman force.

This very point has been made the subject of extended criticism. It has been charged that here Wagner 'forgot' his dramatic duties over his poetic business. Bulthaupt says that 'he has had but slight regard for dramatic action in *Tristan und Isolde*; instead of dramatic progress he has given us lyric rest, absolute, motionless lyricism—and that in an opera, in a music drama, points toward absolute music, against which the master has himself so energetically taken the field.' Artistic inconsistency again—proving once more that art is not a system. In the very act of creating the ultimate 'music drama' the master has overshot his mark

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and created something else—the ‘musical lyric poem’ if you will.

But with what divinely potent means! The ‘endless melody,’ as Wagner himself has called his incessant, eloquent flow of musical substance, is here used in its ultimate expansion. The word, the singers’ declamation, is but a part (and not the most important) of the total expression. The orchestra in an inexhaustible flood of motives, phrases, themes, melodies, significant rhythms and harmonies, reflects like a clear mirror the mood and the emotion in minute detail. It says what speech cannot say, and which in a manner needs no interpretation. Wagner believed to have achieved in *Tristan* ‘a far more intimate fusion of the poem and the music’ than before, because here the words, the verses are so designed that they prescribe the course of the melody and hence require no repetition to make them ‘fit.’ The mere fact that there is no repetition of words is not so important, perhaps, as he thought, for it is not the word in itself, but the word as carrier of the emotion, that makes the value of his music.

On the other hand, the charge that by this method of coördination the melody is hampered in its development and freedom Wagner refutes with the words that ‘in this procedure the melody and its form achieve a wealth and inexhaustibility’ that was unknown before. In this connection, also, he answers the cry of ‘no melody’ with the radical statement that what the opera goers wanted was not melody, but melody in dance-form, to which they had been accustomed; in other words the symmetrical melody and form which reached its highest development at the hands of Beethoven. Beethoven created a type of music that in effect is nothing but one closely connected melody. Now Wagner strove for a parallel achievement in opera. Needless to say, in order to do this he had to break altogether with what he calls the dance forms. He had to

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create the poetic counterpart to the symphonic form, which, while it entirely fills the requirements of symmetry, conforms at the same time to the innermost laws of dramatic form. Here in a nutshell is the 'reform' which Wagner adopted in *Tristan* and which became the ideal for a new musico-dramatic style.

The story of 'Tristan and Iseult' is one of the oldest love stories in the world. Emanating from the Round Table Legends, it spread into the literature of nearly all cultured peoples, Celtic and Germanic. It reached Wagner through the latter line, of course: the version of Gottfried von Strassburg, the mediæval poet, served him as basis. Gottfried's poem was a fragment, but one of high poetic value. Wagner completed and clarified it into a poem of wonderful force. Bulthaupt epitomizes the preliminary story as follows:

Tristan, stricken, has landed upon Ireland's shore under a false name (Tantris), to invoke Isolde's power of feeling against a mortal wound—a daring undertaking, for the protector of the Irish crown, Morold, the last of the male line and the cousin of Isolde, has fallen by Tristan's hand. Isolde recognizes the 'insolent one' and in a sudden flaring up of rage she is about to draw the sword in vengeance; but a single glance from his eyes disarms her. The hero returns home, having given assurance of eternal gratefulness and loyalty. But while her heart, in the ban of that glance, is sick with longing, he is fascinated by the glitter of the day, the idle sun of worldly honor, and remains 'cool to the very heart'—ignorant of the full depth of the image that he has unconsciously absorbed with his glance. He loudly boasts at the court of Cornwall, of

'The world's most beauteous
Kingly bride,'

and presently returns to Ireland as wooer of the fair princess for his aged king, Marke. There love extends over him her fitful, torturing might. But while Isolde with feminine recklessness cries her despair to the winds (in every word of hate uttered against this superhumanly loved traitor flames the raging fire of her love), he, like a man, conceals the inner conflict; only his wan cheek and the quiver in his voice betray what

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goes on within him. Thus they find themselves on shipboard, nearing King Marke's court. At this point the drama begins: in three acts it constitutes a series of psychological scenes that are dramatically hardly more than lyrical tableaux. Wagner unfolds the tragic story step by step. Isolde's wrath over her humiliation; her sending for Tristan, his refusal on the plea of duty, the retainer Kurwenal's taunting answer, the frantic outpouring of her woe to the faithful Brangaene; the latter's mention of the casket containing the magic potions and its sinister suggestions of relief bring us to the first dramatic crisis: the offering of the death potion to Tristan 'in atonement for guilt unatoned.' But the potion is not that of death. Horror-stricken, Brangaene has in the last moment exchanged it for one more fatal still—the potion of love. Oblivious to all about them the lovers embrace as the cry of the sea-folk announces their arrival at Cornwall.

Stress must be laid on the fact that the love draft is to be understood merely as a symbol. The magic draft is not the author of the lovers' passion, nor is the innocent Brangaene the agent of fate. When later in the drama she reproaches herself for what she has done, Isolde reassures her thus:

'Thy work?
O foolish maid!
Dame Love thou knowest not?
The wonder of her might? . . .'

Not mere puppets are these heroically tragic figures; nothing in their tragic life is an accident. But the heavy hand of fate is upon them. They had sought relief in death, and the flame they sought to smother burst forth in still more irresistible force.

Irresistibly they are caught in the currents of their passions; and they, the truest, most noble of characters, must become traitors and deceivers. Isolde the queen of King Marke, Tristan his nephew and dearest friend. They shun the day, enemy of their secret love, and court the protection of night. Anxiously Brangaene listens for the horns of King Marke's hunt sounding ever more faintly from the distance, as the moon illumines the walls of the castle (in Act II). Isolde, impatiently waiting, finally emerges. Gradually dispelling her faithful servant's caution, she extinguishes the torch, which shall be the signal for her lover's approach. They rush into each other's arms.

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The whole of the second act consists really (as Pohl points out) of only three scenes: the longing expectation, the blissful union and the cruel parting of the lovers. The second of these is one great love duet, which in length and intensity has nothing to equal it. The third is as precipitous in its action as the others were deliberate: King Marke, warned by the treacherous Melot, returns to discover the lovers in their embrace. No anger, no malice, only a deep sorrow moves this noble figure as he calls out in grief. Tristan, hiding Isolde from the gaze of the onlookers, silently admits his guilt; he asks Isolde if she will follow him wherever he will go, and upon her affirmation at once points the way: he challenges Melot and, dropping his own sword, falls upon that of his adversary.

Act III. The staunch Kurwenal has carried his master away to safety and embarked with him for Kareol—the home of his ancestors. In the wild courtyard of this ruined castle by the sea, the hero is nearing his end, attended by his faithful Kurwenal. Isolde, the greatest of healers, has been summoned to his side, and the thought that she still lives gives him strength near the very gates of death. A shepherd pipes a melancholy lay, which he is to change to a merry tune when a sail is sighted. At last, toward evening, the long-expected happens. Tristan in a feverish ecstasy raises himself from his couch. He tears the bandage from his wound as he hurries to meet her, but night already envelops his senses and he has time only to utter her name as in her arms he breathes his last.

The arrival of a second ship precipitates another scene. King Marke, apprised of the true state of affairs and holding the lovers guiltless, is hurrying to forgive and unite them. With Melot and other knights he forces an entrance against Kurwenal's misunderstanding rage. Melot is killed in the struggle and Kurwenal himself mortally wounded. Isolde does not heed what is going on about her: in a marvellous apostrophe to love she, too, breathes out her soul over the body of her beloved.

What can we say of the music of *Tristan*? It is the most beautiful of all the music that flowed from the master's pen, the most spontaneous, the most lyrical, yet the most intense, powerful and characteristic. Hence it is the most elusive; it cannot be described. What avails it if we point out the intensive chromaticism, the sensuous, glowing, colorful chromaticism

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that is the chief characteristic of its musical style? What, if we tell the reader that here Wagner achieved the ultimate expression of his symphonic soul—that the germination of melodies, the crowding, dovetailing, interweaving of themes, the endless-chain sequence of motives reached the highest point of development? Here, indeed, melodies join so closely that they become in effect one melody from beginning to end, a continuous flow that the master had to break off purposely because it beguiled his imagination into the infinite. These are but technical matters; they will help us little to grasp the wonderful substance, or to describe it. *Tristan's* lyricism, the finally liberated, free soaring melody that knows no harmonic fetters, is but the vehicle of that tremendous passion that lies behind it, the irresistible torrent of passion, not only of Tristan and of Isolde but of a whole world, of Wagner himself. Its chromaticism is but the expression of these conflicting emotions of longing, of doubt, of irony, of hate that is love, of love that means death. Thus, too, the unresolved sevenths that beset its score are mere symbols of the unfulfilled, the insistent suspensions that crowd upon each other in phrase after phrase are reflected strivings after the unattainable. Sorrow and pain seek the language of biting dissonances such as have never been heard before; the insanity of Tristan, his feverish pulsations, the trembling grief of Isolde express themselves in irregular and cross rhythms, and fitful syncopations. We personify these ideas and emotions, for it is actually they that achieve these musical wonders; the poet's mastery of his art is merely their instrument. It is the intensity, the reality with which they burned themselves into his very being that is the real secret of *Tristan*; its psychology is the most remarkable thing about it.

The atmosphere of this drama (or *Handlung*, as Wagner simply calls it) is all its own. It is the dreamy

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haze, the rugged mystery of the Celtic race and its sea-bound lands—Ireland, Cornwall, Brittany—painted in convincing colors and lines. The rhythms of the sea-folk, the folkish flavor of the young seaman's song at the beginning and the sailors' chorus later on, the shepherd's lay in Act III, all smack of the race. The brine of the sea pervades the atmosphere. The horns of King Marke's hunt are no mere hunting horns; their muted mystery is of a romanticism whose flavor is strictly of itself. And so every bar of the opera bears its own physiognomy; it is not only Wagner, but Tristan and nothing else.

The Prelude (of whose beauties we have not space to speak) announces the theme of the whole drama—two conflicting themes interwoven, in fact, one the inversion of the other.



The four ascending chromatics are Tristan's and Isolde's love, the descending ones recall the past, the false Tristan—or Tantris. In another interpretation they may be thought to represent Love and Death—or Love and Fate—as you wish. It is no longer a matter of motives but of symbols, psychological symbols that symbolize things that can be felt but hardly expressed. Thus we have motives of anger, impatience, love's desire, blissful happiness, suspicion, consternation, solitude, exaltation, unalterable love, etc. But these labels are only arbitrary. They may help us to remember, but no label could be really true. There are, of course, motifs of more concrete meaning: the diatonic, rhythmic melody of Kareol, Tristan's home, the mysterious harmony of the magic casket, the measured accents of Tristan the Hero, etc. Let us rather dwell on the larger

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things. The whole of Act I is a conflict of emotions: the irony of Isolde's hate and love, the faithful solicitude of Brangaene, the straight-forward pride of Kurwenal, the fatalistic acquiescence of Tristan, all driven on by the immutable workings of fate—a symphony of emotions against the background of the surging sea, ending in the first passionate embrace, a very delirium of love, a climax that leaves a terrific gap in our feelings. In Act II the frame is the mystery of night and the menacing color of Marke's horns. Between them is projected the greatest of all love duets—if we may call it so without desecration. With its broad concave melody as motive it expands into a musical poem of ecstasy, of emotional contrasts, of broad psychology, of powerful characterization. Here is one of the few things in music in which one may revel to one's heart's content without danger of surfeit; its beauty is as ineffable as its workmanship is miraculous. The last scene of Act II—the rude interruption of the lover's ecstasy, the treachery of Melot, and Marke's sorrow—is somewhat too drawn-out, perhaps; Marke's speech is certainly the least interesting stretch in the opera.

But Act III again glows with the fire of imagination. The first half has been called a 'giant painting of sorrow.' The sorrowful color of the shepherd's lay adheres to all of it. The association of motives, the crowding and polyphonic coupling of significant phrases is carried to its ultimate possibility here; as many as four themes are used simultaneously. The last scene is musically—and emotionally—the greatest. The nobly rising melody of Isolde's *Liebestod*, 'that transcendental, entranced, tone-fervid melody,' personifies the great, proud, passionate princess; it pictures her sacrifice of self for love; it epitomizes the triumph of love reigning supreme in the world—which is the theme of *Tristan*. Words fade into insignificance when we begin to describe things so indescribably marvellous. Not ideas,

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emotions are translated directly into tones—and in this words have no part.

VII

As early as 1846, when the composition of *Lohengrin* was going forward shortly after the first draft of the *Meistersinger* poem had been sketched, Wagner conceived the idea of a great drama upon the subject of the 'Nibelungen' saga. Between that date and the thirteenth of August, 1876, when the first performance of the great tetralogy was given in the newly completed Festival Theatre at Bayreuth, there intervened thirty years of artistic labor—a period of almost ceaseless storm, of misery and tribulation such as has hardly ever been the lot of genius. During these years *Lohengrin*, *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger* were completed, volumes of theoretical critical and poetical works were produced, a new artistic creed was formulated. The master, a political exile during the greater part of this time, despairing of the task of piling up 'silent scores,' hard pressed by material want, had virtually given up all hope of recognition for his genius, and the crowning work of his career, interrupted again and again, seemed destined to remain a fragment. Yet *Lohengrin*, already a favorite, was acclaimed through the length and breadth of Germany, while its composer was not privileged even to hear his own work. It was the hearing of a performance of this work that determined the young King Ludwig of Bavaria to go to the master's rescue. His generous intervention in the crisis of Wagner's life is a matter of history and needs no comment here. Suffice it to remind the reader that the completion of the 'Ring' was due directly to the action of this enlightened prince.

We cannot here dwell upon the literary origin of the story of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The Siegfried leg-

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end, as preserved in the mediæval High German *Nibelungenlied*, which has been not inaptly called the German Iliad, furnished an immediate source; the ancient Edda, the treasure of Norse mythology, a deeper one. Thus all the chief characters of Wagner's drama save one are the gods of Norse mythology, but they have undergone many modifications at the hands of the poet. They really belong, as Lavignac puts it, 'neither to Northern mythology nor to that of the Rhine, but to *Wagnerian* mythology.'

In the prose draft of 1846 Wagner combined these elements into a sequence of legendary events none too strongly held together. The last part of this draft he worked up in 1848 into a dramatic poem entitled *Siegfrieds Tod* ('The Death of Siegfried') corresponding to the present *Götterdämmerung*. This constituted the 'chief catastrophe' of the myth, with a mere indication of its connection with the broader scheme, and was designed with a view to the limitations of the contemporaneous operatic stage. But he was soon led to follow this up with another drama, *Der junge Siegfried* (1851), corresponding to the present *Siegfried*. Then, going back to his original plan, he now sketched out the entire 'stage festival play' for three days and a preliminary evening. The poem of *Die Walküre* was finished July 1, 1852, and *Das Rheingold* the following November. The music of the different parts was written in the following periods:

Rheingold: Fall 1853—June 1854.

Walküre: June 1854—March (?) 1856.

Siegfried: Begun second half of 1856; interrupted June 1857; resumed 1865, etc.; completed, February 1871.

Götterdämmerung: October 1869—March 1874.

The sequence of events in the completed poem is essentially the same as in the preliminary draft. But just as in the ultimate working-out of *Die Meistersinger* an 'inner drama' had been added, so in the final con-

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ception of the 'Ring,' the 'soul' of the whole action, the innermost centre about which all these events rotate, is provided in the personality of Wotan, the chiefest of the Gods, the All-father. It is his ambition for world power that furnishes the central motive of the action. Corresponding to the mere conflict of personalities in their contest for this possession of world power there had to be invented an *inner* conflict, a conflict of forces. And so we get the symbolic thought that furnishes the philosophical kernel of the drama, namely that gold (the symbol of power), as long as it serves only an æsthetic, ideal purpose, is pure joy and virtue; but that as soon as it is desired for selfish purposes it becomes a curse. Love and Egoism are two irreconcilable forces, and only he who renounces love may avail himself of the power of gold. This is the underlying motive of the whole drama.

As in the earlier dramas of Wagner, we must again point out the peculiar quality of the action—the juxtaposition of the natural and the supernatural, the human and the superhuman. Chamberlain indeed distinguishes two simultaneous dramas: a tragedy of the will (with Wotan as the chief character), and a tragedy of fate (whose hero is Siegfried). It is in the joining together of the two that the great weaknesses of the work are exposed. The 'Ring' is full of dramatic inconsistencies, even absurdities. It is the biggest, in some respects, the greatest, yet at the same time the least convincing of Wagner's dramas. Volumes of criticism have been hurled at it, and the mighty structure would be tottering to pieces, were it not for the marvellous musical texture that knits it closely and firmly together. That alone will always preserve the 'Ring' as a gigantic masterpiece. The modern listener must shut his eyes to many incongruities, while his ears take in a well-nigh endless torrent of wonderful sound, in the enjoyment of which the soul may revel.

'DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN' (THE DRAMA)

"The four dramas which form the complete "Ring" develop many changes of fortune brought about by the curse which the Nibelung Alberich has laid upon the power-endowing ring, forged by him from the Rhine-gold which he stole from the Rhine maidens (Undines), and which, in turn, Wotan has wrested from him. Through many vicissitudes the cursed ring brings destruction on all who possess it; the series of catastrophes which it occasions result in the final ruin of the race of the gods, and only comes to an end when the last victim, Brünnhilde, who returns to the purifying waters of the Rhine its stolen treasure, at last delivers the world from the terrible anathema.' Thus Lavignac sums up the story. The action may be epitomized as follows:

Das Rheingold, forming an expository prologue, consists of four scenes which are played without interruption, the transformation being accomplished while the music continues. During the first the four Rhine daughters are guarding the gold at the bottom of the stream. Alberich, the crafty and avaricious Nibelung, after failing in an attempt to seduce them, learns from their babbling the mystery of the gold—that it will confer supreme power upon him who, having procured it, will renounce love forever. Lust for gold supersedes voluptuous desire: he seizes the gold and pronounces the required renunciation.

With the gold gone, the river is shrouded in gloom, the nixies disappear, and gradually the scene changes to the abode of the gods, where Wotan and his wife Fricka contemplate the newly completed Valhalla, the wonderful castle built for the master of the universe by the giants Fasolt and Fafner. The price of this magnificent structure is to be Freia, the goddess of youth, love and beauty. Repenting of the terrible bargain, Allfather has sent Loge, the crafty God of fire, all over the world in search of a substitute that shall satisfy the giants. He returns to report that only one being in all the world has renounced the joys of love, and that is Alberich. He tells of the robbery of the Rhine-gold, of the ring which Alberich has forged from it and the immense treasure that he has amassed by means of the power it gives him. Nothing but that treasure will appease the giants, whose avarice is now aroused. They

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exact Wotan's promise to get it for them and carry Freia off as hostage. Her absence hastens Wotan's resolve to comply, for Freia alone can supply the golden apples which give the gods eternal youth. Wotan and Loge descend to Nibelheim. Here, in the bowels of the earth, Alberich rules over the other Nibelungs, who continue to amass for their master the treasures of the earth. One of them, Mime, skilled as a smith, has forged for him the Tarnhelm, a helmet by means of which one may become invisible or change one's shape at will. Alberich utters threats of vengeance against the gods; Wotan is about to chastise him, but Loge, more diplomatically, compliments him upon his powers, but questions the efficacy of the helmet's magic. Thereupon Alberich, in order to demonstrate, transforms himself first into a dragon, then into a toad, in which state he is easily overpowered.

In the fourth scene he is brought, a prisoner, to the surface of the earth, and is forced to relinquish the treasure, the magic helmet, and the ring. In a dreadful rage he calls down upon the talisman the terrible curse which carries misfortune to all that shall own it. Wotan, unmindful of this, slips the ring on his finger; the giants enter to demand the treasure: it shall be heaped up between their two spears so high that it shall hide Freia completely from their sight. When all but the ring has been piled up they can still see the bright gleam of the goddess's eyes. They demand the ring with which to close the aperture; Wotan refuses, even though they threaten to carry off the goddess forever. But Erda, the all-wise, earth spirit and mother of the Norns, who weave the cord of destiny, appears and advises Wotan to yield the ring. This he does only after a hard struggle with himself and an unsuccessful attempt to learn more of the future. The curse of the ring at once works its effect: the giants wrangle over its possession, and Fafner kills Fasolt with one blow. Brutally he gathers up the treasure of which he is now the sole possessor and drags it away, leaving the gods mute with horror.

The clouds which have gathered with the frown of the gods are now dispelled by Donner, the thunder god, who summons the storm. Calm being restored, Froh builds the rainbow—a wonderful bridge by which the gods may enter Valhalla. Wotan picks up a sword left behind by Fafner and muses upon the future struggle with the Powers of Darkness. Loge already thinks of serving his own cause independently, and the Rhine daughters are heard bewailing the loss of their treasure, while the immortals proceed over their luminous path.

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At this point it may be well to dwell for a moment upon the character of Wotan. Like the gods of Greek mythology, those of the Germanic are not absolute masters of themselves. There is a destiny which rules even them, and like mortals they are subject to the consequences of their own vices. Even their immortality is only a conditional one, and their ultimate destruction is frequently mentioned in the Edda. Wotan in particular is the embodiment of law and order. His power is supposed to be based upon treaties—contracts which seem continually to bring him into conflict with his own conscience. He seems, indeed, concerned more with the letter than with the spirit, and is continually plotting to evade his obligations. His morality is certainly questionable; craft and cunning rather than superior force appear as his chief weapons, and altogether he cuts rather a sorry figure in our eyes.

The end of *Rheingold* finds him plotting to stave off the fatal day which he feels is coming but which he can neither foretell nor prevent. In this spirit he has made provision to gather about him in Valhalla all the heroes who fall in battle, and who may help to defend him against the hostile powers. He has begotten the nine Valkyries (*Walküren*), immortal, stalwart virgins who shall lead the fallen heroes to the cloudy heights of Valhalla. Moreover, he himself, as Volsung (*Wälse*), has sojourned on the earth to beget of a mortal woman a hero who shall regain the treasure that has been sold to Fafner. He himself may not (according to his agreement) assist the hero in this task; yet we see how he is aiming to subvert his own conditions: he himself has taught his human son the warrior's art. Siegmund and Sieglinde, twin brother and sister, are the fruits of his begetting. It is their story that forms the subject of *Die Walküre*.

In Act I of *Walküre* Siegmund, in distress, reaches the hut of Hunding, a surly warrior. He finds succor at the hands of Hunding's wife, but when her master returns, Siegmund learns that he is, without weapon, in the house of an enemy. The woman, however, has conceived a passionate love for him, and after Hunding has retired for the night (having emptied the goblet into which Sieglinde, unnoticed, has poured a strong sleeping potion) she confides to Siegmund her story: how she was abducted and forcibly wedded to her husband. She tells also how on her nuptial day an old man entered the hut and, terrifying all but her, plunged deep into the trunk of the old central ash a sword which is destined for him who shall have the power to draw it forth. None has succeeded so far,

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To her new-found friend (who has called himself *Wehwalt*—'Cause of Misfortune') she looks for the deed. In the rapture of new-born love they ardently embrace. As they gaze upon each other they recognize their relationship: they are Siegmund and Sieglinde; both are the children of Wälse who has plunged the sword into the tree for their deliverance. Imbued with new strength, Siegmund seizes the shining hilt; it is Nothung, the weapon his father promised to provide in direst need—and he pulls it from its mighty sheath. The lovers embrace in an ecstasy of joy as the curtain falls.

Siegmund and Sieglinde have fled: Hunding is pursuing them. Wotan has decreed death for the latter, and at the opening of Act II (in a rocky country) is instructing his favorite daughter, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde, to so order the coming conflict. But Fricka, his wife, the protector of sex morality, guardian of the marriage vow, has determined upon the punishment of the pair guilty of adultery and incest. Outraged by her spouse's frequent swervings from the path of moral righteousness, she has vowed not to tolerate the protection of this fruit of his own infidelity. In a stormy scene with her husband she exacts from him against his will an oath to so alter his decree as to sacrifice his own son. Crushed and saddened, Wotan now commands Brünnhilde to protect Hunding whom he hates, and to lead Siegmund to Valhalla. The Valkyrie pleads the hero's cause in vain; Wotan curses his own sovereignty and longs for the end of the gods—the end which Erda has foretold shall come when a child is born to Alberich. That event is even now imminent.

Siegmund and Sieglinde soon arrive upon the scene. Sieglinde falls down exhausted, her lover stands guard over her. Brünnhilde appears to him and announces his approaching death. But the delights of Valhalla have no lure for him so long as Sieglinde cannot follow. Rather than leave her he will kill both himself and her. Brünnhilde is touched by his words and despite Wotan's injunction she promises the loving warrior her aid. Hunding is heard approaching; Siegmund runs to meet him, with Brünnhilde at his side. They clash in battle, but just as Hunding is about to receive a death blow, Wotan appears amid thunder and lightning and parries the thrust with his spear, breaking Siegmund's sword into splinters. Hunding kills the Volsung and in turn is killed by the look of utter disdain which Wotan darts at him. Meantime Brünnhilde has hastened to save the fainting Sieglinde, and makes her escape

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as Wotan, his fury now turned upon his disobedient daughter, starts in pursuit.

Act III. Brünnhilde with her charge now seeks the protection of her eight sisters, the Valkyries who at the opening are gradually assembling upon a rocky height. Their ride through the clouds with warriors' bodies at their saddles, is vividly pictured in music and scene. Brünnhilde implores their aid for Sieglinde, who, however, no longer cares for life, since Siegmund is dead. But when she hears that a new life, a new Volsung, stirs within her, she will live at all costs. Siegfried shall be his name and he shall be supreme as a hero. Armed with the sword of the gods (Nothung) whose fragments Brünnhilde confides to her ward, he shall conquer all. Following the Valkyries' advice Sieglinde seeks refuge in an adjoining forest—the same in which Fafner is watching over his treasure.

Wotan now arrives, full of wrath over the disobedience of his favorite daughter. Against his will, impotent god that he is, he must punish her: she shall sacrifice her divinity forever, and shall become the slave of love, since love has swayed her from duty. But upon her entreaties not to abandon her to the first comer, All-father relents: only a hero, one who knows no fear, shall win her, for an impenetrable barrier of fire shall be raised by Loge about the rock upon which she is to fall into perpetual sleep. Thus the God takes leave of his beloved daughter—the wisest of them all, for her mother is Erda. Wotan strikes the rock with his spear, the flames burst forth and gradually envelop the entire mountain. None shall approach but they who fear not the point of Wotan's spear.

There shall be but one such—Siegfried. In the interim between *Walküre* and the drama which bears his name, the hero has been growing to manhood. His mother has died in giving him birth, and confided him to the care of an ugly dwarf, Mime, the smith who has forged the Tarnhelm for Alberich, and who like his former master hovers in the neighborhood of the cave where Fafner, having assumed the shape of a fearful dragon, guards the Nibelung's treasure. To win that treasure for himself, the crafty Mime has reared the hero child. He has made him believe that he himself is his father, and even tries to exact gratitude for his solicitous nursing of the child.

At the opening of the first act he is engaged in one of many attempts to forge a sword for Siegfried that the superhumanly strong youth won't shatter with the first blow upon the anvil. Siegfried enters, leading a bear with which he terrifies Mime. He reproaches him for incompetence, and draws out of him bit

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by bit the story of his own origin. He demands the fragment of the sword that his mother had left for him and leaves the dwarf to forge it for him anew. Despairing of his task, Mime, once more alone, is interrupted by the 'Wanderer' in whom he presently recognizes his enemy Wotan. The God offers to answer any three questions that he may put to him. These questions rehearse the broad facts of the great drama and are satisfactorily answered. In his turn the dwarf is now asked three questions, which he must answer upon the forfeit of his head. He fails at the third—'Who shall forge the sword Nothung anew?'—for that is precisely what he himself would like to know. Wotan answers it for him: 'he who knows not fear'; and he confers upon that same individual the gage which he disdains to collect—Mime's head. The Wanderer departs. Terrified to death, the dwarf reports to the returning Siegfried fresh failure with the sword. This time the youth himself proceeds to accomplish the task, after his own way—he files the steel into splinters, recasts it and hammers it into shape upon the anvil, singing a boisterous song the while. The sword finished, he tests it upon the anvil, which he cleaves in two at one blow. The miserable dwarf, now foreseeing his own doom at the hands of this youth who 'knows no fear,' proceeds to teach it to him, with ludicrous results. Presently they go forth into the forest where Fafner lies. Will he learn it there?

Before they arrive at the cave, in Act II, Wotan, as the Wanderer, has an encounter with Alberich, who is keeping watch in front of it. He, Alberich's deadly enemy, advises the Nibelung of the approach of the young hero, but tells him that Mime is the only one whom Alberich need fear. As for the God himself, he disdains the treasure. He even advises Alberich to wake the dragon and to propose saving his life in return for the treasure. This is done and the offer promptly refused. The God departs in a storm, as Alberich, vowing anew to crush the detested race of the gods, hides himself. Day dawns and Siegfried arrives with his companion.

Unable to inspire the youth with fear at the thought of the terrible monster, Mime is finally forced to leave him alone. An idyllic scene now follows, as Siegfried, listening to the murmurs of the forest, sinks into a reverie, thinking of that mother whom he has never known, and vaguely feeling the mysterious joys of life. He hears the bird of the forest, tries to imitate its song upon a reed, and, failing, resorts to the horn at his side, sounding a joyous call. This awakens Fafner. Far from fear, the youth experiences a veritable joy at the dragon's sight,

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and after a struggle plunges his sword deep into its side. Having tasted the dragon's blood which has made his fingers smart, he is given new powers of understanding. The bird of the forest again sings to him and he can understand its language. It reveals to him the secret of the treasure. When Mime returns and finds Siegfried contemplating the fateful ring (which alone, besides the Tarnhelm, seems to interest him) the youth understands also the true meaning of Mime's hypocritical words. Disgusted with the perfidy they reveal, he kills the dwarf without further ado, while Alberich's sardonic laughter is heard from the distance. Again the bird speaks to him. Solace for his loneliness is what the hero now desires. The bird sings of Brünnhilde, the loveliest of women, destined for 'him who knows not fear.' Siegfried springs up, and, inspired to accomplish this new conquest, follows the bird as it flutters away to guide him.

He has not yet arrived at the foot of the rock when the third act opens. Wotan is here again; for the last time he appears upon the scene. In his despair over the inevitable he invokes Erda, who, however, can tell him nothing. She refers him to the Norns for knowledge of the future; and to Brünnhilde, the wise, if he would alter the course of destiny. But alas, Brünnhilde is no longer a goddess and cannot help him. With final resolve Wotan now abandons himself to the power of immutable law. Already Siegfried approaches, who shall be its instrument. But once more the God revolts; in agony over the thought of coming destruction he bars the hero's way. A parley ensues and finally Siegfried smashes Wotan's lance with his own god-made sword. A roll of thunder is heard, All-father is vanquished; the hero proceeds, his horn is heard further and further away as he mounts the rock where Brünnhilde sleeps.

The setting of the last scene is identical with the last of *Die Walküre*. Brünnhilde sleeps upon the summit of the rocks, her form hidden by her helmet and shield. Siegfried approaches, lifts the shield and cuts the armor; luxurious tresses stream forth as he removes the helmet. He is entranced. Is this fear? he asks as he grasps at his heart in his strange trouble. With a long kiss he awakens the virgin, who apostrophizes to the sun's rays. As Siegfried tells his name, she is inspired with joy and sadness by turns, for now her divinity is finally gone; she must abandon herself to the power of love. For love she will abandon the cause of the gods: Siegfried, her treasure, the treasure of the world, is her all.

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Götterdämmerung (the dusk of the Gods), the last of the tetralogy, opens upon the scene of Brünnhilde's rock, shrouded in the darkness of night. A prologue of purely symbolic significance, full of mystery and prophecy, but without dramatic importance, precedes the three acts. In it the three Norns are seen weaving the cord of destiny, while their voices record the momentous events. We learn of Wotan's drinking at the spring of wisdom, in the shadow of the world-ash, and the consequent sacrifice of one of his eyes,* of his tearing off of one of the limbs of the mighty tree to fashion himself a spear upon which are engraved the sacred runes—the treaties which constitute his power; of the consequent withering of the ash, which is now cut up by the heroes of Valhalla for a colossal pyre that shall eventually consume the race of eternal. Here the cord snaps, Alberich's curse has its effect, the prophetic power of the Norns has gone and they descend into the earth to seek their mother Erda.

With the broadening light of day Siegfried and Brünnhilde, the heroic lovers, emerge from their dwelling. Enriched by the former Valkyrie's store of wisdom and his body made invulnerable by her art, he starts forth on fresh adventure. He takes Brünnhilde's shield, and Grane, her steed, and in token of his love gives her the fateful ring, ignorant of its malevolent power. His horn is heard more and more faintly as he descends toward the Rhine.

In Act I we are upon the shores of the river in the hall of the Giebiung. Gunther and Guttrune, son and daughter of Grimhilde, are talking with their half-brother Hagen, whose father is Alberich the Nibelung. It is he that is destined to accomplish the fatal deed in which his father failed. He has inherited the hatred of the gods and of the heroic race begotten of them; and he also possesses the secret of the ring. Even now he is plotting to get Siegfried, its present possessor, into his power. With that view he arouses in Gunther the desire to possess Brünnhilde, the wonderful virgin dwelling upon the rock. Siegfried (whose love for Brünnhilde he does not reveal), the only one capable of penetrating the fiery rampart, shall woo her for him, and Guttrune herself shall become the wife of Siegfried. Enslaved by her charms the hero will easily yield his prize, but to accomplish this purpose a magic draught is needed that shall obliterate the past from his memory and make him enamoured of her who serves it to him.

* Wotan throughout the cycle is represented as having only one of his eyes.

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The action moves swiftly on. Siegfried arrives. He and Gunther take oaths of loyalty and friendship; Gutrune serves the draught; Siegfried, but a moment ago full of memories of Brünnhilde, is now, by the power of the philtre, enraptured with the princess, who retires in confusion. The plan to gain Brünnhilde is quickly made; the Tarnhelm (whose power Hagen has just revealed) shall help by effecting Siegfried's disguise as Gunther. The two men depart, sped by Gutrune, leaving Hagen to meditate upon his schemes. The next scene sees the accomplishment of the deed. Siegfried, in the form of Gunther, appears at the rock of Brünnhilde, who is filled with joy at the sound of her lover's horn from afar. The supposed Gunther appears, to her utter consternation, and brutally overpowers her and wrests the ring from her hand. She is forced to enter the grotto, while her oblivious husband calls Nothung to witness his virtuous conduct and his loyalty to his ally. Thus the curse of the ring continues to exercise its potency.

Act II brings us back to the banks of the Rhine. It is before the dawn. Hagen, asleep, is being prompted in his dreams by Alberich, his father, who incites him afresh to the struggle for the ring and world-power. Siegfried must be tricked, for, unconscious of the ring's power, he escapes its curse and may even, if allowed the time, restore it to the Rhine-daughters—which would mean irretrievable loss for the Nibelungs. The dawn breaks, Siegfried returns to announce the imminent return of Gunther with his noble prize. Gutrune is overjoyed at the news and Hagen calls together the vassals of Gunther. Preparations for a double wedding go forward. Gunther and his new bride are acclaimed by the vassals and greeted by Siegfried and Gutrune. As Brünnhilde beholds her true husband she is dumb with astonishment. But Siegfried's memory is not awakened; he supports her as she is about to faint, an episode which leads to her discovery of the ring (which she supposed Gunther had taken from her) on Siegfried's finger. She divines treachery and openly accuses Siegfried, renouncing Gunther as husband. Hagen pretends to entertain suspicions and goads Siegfried into taking a solemn oath upon the point of his (Hagen's) spear that Brünnhilde's accusation is untrue. By that very weapon may he perish, if his oath is false. Brünnhilde, in utter rage, in her turn takes up the oath, calling down vengeance upon the traitor. As Siegfried departs, thinking only of his new love, Hagen insinuates himself into Brünnhilde's confidence. He offers his aid—Siegfried shall perish at his hands. Prompted by jealousy, Brünnhilde reveals

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the spot where Siegfried is vulnerable—between the shoulders—for, knowing that never would he turn his back upon an enemy, she has neglected this. Gunther is now drawn into the plot with promises of power through the ring, and Siegfried's fate is decreed. Meantime the latter and Gutrune have adorned themselves and lead their wedding train, inviting Gunther and his 'bride' to do likewise.

The hunt of the following day (Act III) shall furnish the opportunity for the dastardly deed. At the very shores of the Rhine we shall witness it. The three Rhine daughters ascend to the surface and still lament their loss. Just then Siegfried, the possessor of the ring, approaches—having lost his companions in the pursuit of game. The nixies accost him and banteringly coax him to give up the ring; he refuses, remembering his struggle with Fafner; then hesitates, but hearing for the first time of the malediction and its fateful history, he will not yield to their threats that he shall perish by it that very day. His hunting companions now arrive. During the noon-day respite Siegfried tells Gunther of his early life. Hagen, in the midst of his recital, restores his memory by means of another magic draught, and the unfortunate Gunther now hears all the terrible truth of Siegfried's first passage through the flames and his marriage to Brünnhilde. As the ravens of Wotan fly over his head Siegfried turns to look, and Hagen plunges his spear into his back at the vulnerable spot. The hero tries to crush his assassin, but fails and, finishing his tale with effort, breathes his last. His body is carried on the shield of the vassals back to the castle.

There, in the final scene, Gutrune is seen anxiously awaiting her husband's return. She has been disturbed by the wild and sinister laugh of Brünnhilde, who has left her apartment during the night. Hagen appears and after first bidding her prepare for her husband's return brutally reports that he has been killed 'by a wild boar.' Presently the funeral procession arrives. Gutrune, grief-stricken, swoons. Hagen attempts to claim the ring as his prize, and stabs Gunther, who intervenes on Gutrune's behalf. As he approaches the corpse, it raises a threatening arm. Horror seizes the assemblage. Now Brünnhilde emerges from the rear, and, brushing aside Gutrune, claims for herself alone the widow's right of tears. She sees all things clearly. Calmly she proclaims the accomplishment of the highest will. The end of the gods is near; the great pyre is about to be lighted. One thing only reigns supreme: human love, which is to redeem the world. Her final task—restoring

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the ring, purged by fire, to the Rhine—is now to be accomplished. She orders Siegfried's body placed upon a pyre, to which she herself lights the torch. With Grane, her noble steed, she follows her hero into death. As the flames leap high the Rhine overflows its banks; the Rhine daughters approach to reclaim the ring, just as Hagen makes one last desperate attempt to grasp it and is swallowed by the waves. The pyre lighted by Brünnhilde has started the world conflagration, a red glow spreads across the distant heights and Valhalla crumbles to pieces. The redemption of the world is at last accomplished, through the supreme power of love.

VIII

In *Rheingold* Wagner first employed his system of typical themes (*leit-motifs*) with conscious consistency. It is therefore natural that his mastery of material should not be as complete as it became later (notably in *Tristan*); but the very magnitude of the tetralogy induced a broader—if not a denser—development of the method, while the correlation of the four individual works by the use of identical terms has here emphasized what we might call the 'philological,' or linguistic, properties of the themes more than anywhere else. Meeting with the same motifs in the different works (in various harmonic or melodic transformations and different tone-colorings, according to the varying environment), their psychological significance (which is often extra-musical and acquired only by an association of ideas) makes them seem fundamentally or absolutely characteristic, whether they are or not. It seems as though here were a whole vocabulary, which might be used as effectively by another musician desiring to express similar ideas. But it is of course merely Wagner's individual expression, and that is, after all, arbitrary, as all art expressions are.

Nevertheless, if we compare the physiognomy of some of the melodic formations we must recognize

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their extreme aptness. Compare the flowing melodies of the Rhine music, symbolizing the water as the primary element and the mythological source of all being:



with the motif of fire ('Loge') :



with the storm call of Donner:



and the broad expressive arpeggio melody of the 'rain-bow.' Then take the motif of the Nibelungen's forge (first to represent Alberich's threat, as he pursues the Rhine-daughters), and the heavy stride of the giants:

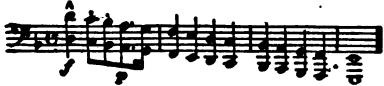


then the dragging bass figures accompanying the dragon and the oppressive chords signifying 'bondage':

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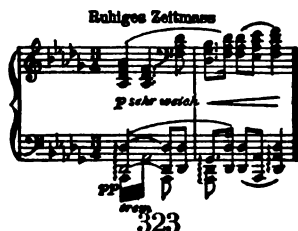


It would seem that no other phrases could express just these things. But, as Bulthaupt says, 'one must not search too assiduously in this direction. As there are in any language but a small number of words that paint the object with their sound (onomatopoeic) so in music the forms whose representative power is inherent are limited to a few; and happy is their finder and possessor.' But there are, besides, what our authority calls 'motifs of the second class'—which *fit* their subject, either outwardly or psychologically, and in the imitation of these Wagner's mastery is supreme. 'There are perhaps a few successions of notes whose invention is not extraordinary or whose musical significance is nil, such as the



so-called "treaty" motif:

or the motif of flight (first used in the giants' pursuit of Freia, later notably in the *Walküre*, during Siegmund's and Sieglinde's flight before Hunding). But who ever could think out the wonderful Valhalla motif,



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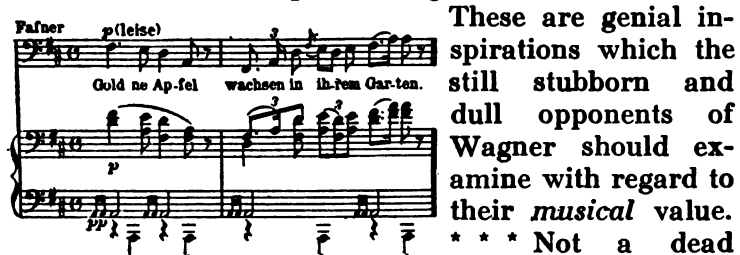
which one never tires to hear, as often as it appears throughout the entire work, and which again is closely related to the "ring" motif:



who, indeed, the cajoling song of Fricka



(also called the motif of love's bondage), who the delicious motif of Freia's golden apples, coming for the first time from the lips of the giant Fafner:



lump of gold, not the dead article is described by these themes; it is the spiritual relationship that they emphasize, their symbolic power is the important quality.'

A most thorough study is necessary in order to recognize the relationship, the relative position, the combination of these motifs, and often one cannot help feeling that for the greater part these efforts leave us far from an absolute sympathy with, or a direct understanding of, the work—at least in the theatre. This leit-motif feature is, indeed, not the most important, although it has received almost undue emphasis at the



Siegfried and the Dragon
After a painting by Hermann Hendrick



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hands of commentators,* and by students, who are wont to provide themselves with a 'guide,' or to listen to 'explanatory lectures' before hearing the opera itself. That such a mere memorizing of the 'vocabulary' does not mean an understanding of the music goes without saying. It were better to appreciate the music as a whole, in its symphonic character, and by a correlation of its individual elements to recognize the underlying unity of the whole work, despite the multiplicity of its elements.

Aside from all its sophistication, its dramatic ingenuity, its terse power of characterization, the 'Ring' derives its greatest significance from the symphonic unity, and from its intrinsic musical beauty. It is as a marvellously *symphonic* structure that the work must astound us, the more we familiarize ourselves with it. Forget all the dramatic ingenuities down to the smallest detail, the strength of its characterization, the sophisticated objectivity, and you will continue to revel in the spontaneous fancies of a musician of inexhaustible creative force, who by a process of progressive generation fashions his material into ever new shapes—shapes whose variety is as infinite as their common relationship is definite, while their beauty becomes more and more wonderful as we abandon ourselves to its charm. 'The whole world of German thematic development, the complete rhetoric of the symphony with all its shadings and contrapuntal development, is here demonstrated,' says Bie. 'A tremendous symphony has been written down by a true orchestral hand, which did not recognize its own avocation, and which would bring concrete ideas, scene, and even song under its sway.' For the melodic line, with its verse-like formation, which had thus far determined the division and the rhythm of the orchestral texture, is now determined by *it*—by the 'absolute musical phrase' without words.

* Wolzogen, Lavignac, etc.

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Similarly, in a broader sense, not only has the operatic 'number' yielded up even its traditional existence, but scene-division itself is now a mere outward sign. The musical flow, like the dramatic action, *never stops*; its course, its very accents and measures are determined by the requirements of thematic development.

The management of the voices, as a matter of course, likewise departs from all operatic usage. There are occasional flights of lyricism, there are even formal sections of lyric character; but the general effect is that of mere 'heightened declamation,' the orchestral melody is more continuous than the vocal. Ensemble there is none, in the old sense; even Siegmund and Sieglinde do not sing a love duet, while Siegfried and Mime sedulously go out of each other's way (in a musical sense), the Nibelungen in *Rheingold* have no chorus. Only the Rhine-daughters sing their mellifluous vocalization, and the Valkyries (in *Die Walküre*) their shouts, in polyphonic form—a concession to their superhuman character perhaps. After Wagner's long interruption of work on the 'Ring,' between Acts II and III of *Siegfried*, a relaxation of this dramatic *purism* is apparent. Siegfried and Brünnhilde sing the ecstasy of their love in exultant thirds, becoming 'absolute instruments' in their support of the orchestra's thematic development; in *Götterdämmerung* Gunther, Hagen and Brünnhilde have a trio-conspiracy, Siegfried sings along with the Rhine-daughters, and the vassals of Gunther have a regular chorus of homage. Wagner has been justly accused, therefore, of once more 'becoming operatic' toward the end of the 'Ring.' Which proves nothing except that he was first and foremost a musician, a *tone-poet* whom even his own theories could not restrain.

Before pointing out a few of the highest beauties in this most gigantic of all scores, let us dwell a moment on the orchestral revolution that was wrought in its

'DAS RHEINGOLD'

making, and which had a lasting influence not only on Wagner's later works (including *Tristan*, *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*), but upon his successors, irrespective of schools. First of all there must be recorded the complete harmonic emancipation of the individual 'color groups' by the addition of the fourth (or fifth) instrument: the English horn to the three oboes; the bass clarinet to the three clarinets; a fourth flute; three trumpets and a bass trumpet; three trombones and a contrabass trombone, two tenor and two bass tubas, with a contrabass tuba. Thus the lowest register is complete, in all the different qualities of 'wind.' There are eight horns, no less than six harps in the orchestra (rarely used outside of Bayreuth) besides one on the stage; two pairs of timpani, besides percussion instruments for every conceivable effect. All the strings are divided into 'choirs': the violins into eight, the violas and 'cellos into six.

But this is not merely an increase of resource, no mere whim or passion for greater volume. It is an increase in the means of expression, made inevitable by the infinite fancy of the poet. Now he is free to characterize an idea, a personage or situation as his imagination wills, he may paint his Valhalla entirely in large brass, characterize the Wanderer with trombones only, the brotherhood in arms and the announcement of death entirely in trombones and trumpets. He may build up a crescendo by sheer addition of instruments as in the opening E-flat chord of the *Rheingold*, without increase in strength; he may use any color, any shade in any register that his object requires, without harmonic alloy of false color.

His color distinctions have become more minute; new and unsuspected suggestions are gotten out of individual instruments. The horns color the Valkyries' ride (with trills, with string *glissandos*, harp and triangle figures woven about them), the forging of the sword

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and the rising of the sun (in *Götterdämmerung*); not only they but all the brass (even the trombone) are muted to suggest sinister intrigue and mystery. The harp gives the rainbow its glow, with strings and flute; it makes the scintillating gleam of the magic fire; the flute paints the color of the molten metal (in *Siegfried*), and the joy of Brünnhilde's awakening. The special and bizarre effects of each individual instrument are exploited as never before. We have mentioned the muting of the brass and the divided strings. He goes further: instruments are made to groan, violins play *col legno*, drum beats on cymbals suggest Mime's world dream, divided pizzicati of the strings surround Loge's fidgetings. There is an unheard-of prodigality of technical means; a whole polyphonic web to give a tint; a rush of strings to throw a shadow; figurations, arabesques, infinitesimal *pointillage* effects make a canvas that is unique in the magnitude of its variety. All that had been timidly attempted, carried out in detached instances—individualization of the instruments, the unrestricted exploitations of orchestral colors—now becomes an organized accomplishment.

Das Rheingold, representing as it does the experimental stage of the new manner, still somewhat timid, less genial in its developments, less colorful in its orchestration, is the least interesting of the 'Ring' operas. Still, from the first gigantic organ point on E-flat to the Rainbow motif at the end, it reveals a wealth of musical invention. It is a series of brilliant tonal pictures projected upon a background of elemental grandeur. The music undertakes to portray these vast forces of Nature, and it succeeds where the drama fails; the large utterance of the 'early gods' is impressive while their figures are not. The Rhine-daughters' song, with its sweet, simple harmonies and its gracious melody, and Loge's song, '*So weit Leben*

‘DIE WALKÜRE’

und Weben, might be pointed out as especially pleasing musical fragments.

In *Walküre* the composer has thoroughly found himself. He has done with the exposition of his drama, and plunges into a spontaneous development of his characters; he has left the gods and their supernatural stride to deal with humans, human destinies and human emotions. Siegfried and Sieglinde are figures who at once engage our sympathy, every word they utter brings them nearer to our hearts. The whole first act of *Walküre*, of which their love is the theme, is unsurpassed in its spontaneity, in its beauty and strength of expression, in its characterization and tone-painting. From the first rushing passages of the storm, before the curtain rises (there is no real prelude) to the last exultant notes of Siegmund as he and Sieglinde start on their flight, we are held in the spells of a great lyrical exposition of human psychology. The clinging appeal of Sieglinde’s compassion:



the love-motif, of ‘Mozartian beauty,’



and the heroic motif of the Volsungs



and their fate



Moderator



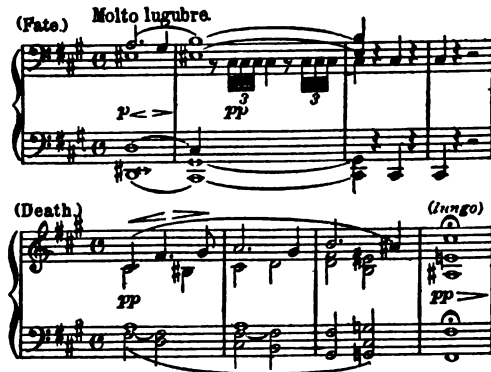
Lack of space forbids our dwelling upon details. Let us mention only the biggest things. In the second act we first greet Brünnhilde with her characteristic, wild cry:



‘SIEGFRIED’



In the second scene she becomes the centre of the drama. Her announcement of Siegfried's death, beginning with the wonderfully impressive motives of 'Fate' and 'Death':



is a passage which for solemn beauty and depth of feeling Wagner has never surpassed. Its musical value is equalled by only one other in the opera—the closing scene, Wotan's farewell, beginning that 'broad melodic gesture':

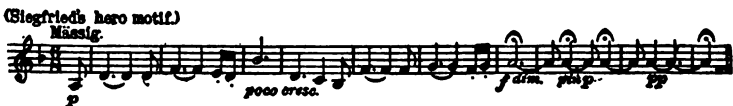


The soul agony expressed by Brünnhilde imploring

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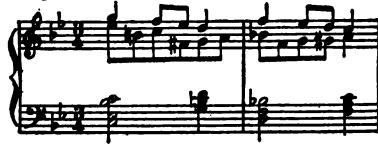
mercy; the magic chromaticism of the 'eternal sleep' (see Vol. II, p. 434), the sweet melody of Brünnhilde's sleep, working up to the glowing colors and bristling arabesques of the magic fire as the flames burst forth and envelop the stage—these are mountain peaks of imagination, even of that of a Wagner.

In *Siegfried* there are perhaps fewer things that stand out so definitely in the memory. But there is at least one passage of a sustained beauty such as even *Walküre* can hardly boast. We speak of the 'forest music,' of Act II, the *Waldweben*, with its mystery, its delicate fancy, its subtle tone-painting, its depicting of the vague longings of youth—a symphonic poem of the great outdoors in its tenderest manifestations and revelations to the human heart. In its characterizations (of Mime, of Siegfried, of the Wanderer) *Siegfried* stands at least on the level of *Walküre*. The charm of the youthful Siegfried's personality, his exuberance (love of life), his buoyant heroism, his desire to travel, his instinctive filial affection are set forth in beautifully apt phrases, of which we quote the most important:



‘GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG’

(Siegfried's desire to travel.)



(Filial Love.)



The casting of the sword with Siegfried's wild, clanging song of the forge is a masterful representation of the sheer force of youth in the joy of living and doing.

Mr. Streatfeild also points out the scaling of Brünnhilde's rock in Act III as a scene which in 'power, picturesqueness and command of orchestral color and resource' Wagner never surpassed. This whole last act, written after the long interruption, bears witness to the impetuous freshness with which he attacked the work anew. It represents the triumph of music over dramatic difficulties. By a new process of transformation his old themes acquired a new potency and the new ones which he added have a lyric flavor all their own. We quote only two, which Lavignac labels 'Peace' and 'Siegfried Treasure of the World' respectively:

Sehr ruhig und mässig bewegt



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Both were used afterwards in the *Siegfried Idyll*, which Wagner wrote upon the birth of his son Siegfried. Here they are but two gems in the diadem that crowns the work. The exultant love scene between Siegfried and the awakened Brünnhilde has not its equal in Wagner for spontaneity, high spirits and joyful abandon. No wonder Wagner loved *Siegfried* best of all his works—it is certainly the most 'lovable' (unless you prefer *Meistersinger*) even though some of the others may be greater.

We shall not be able to bring the same sympathy to *Götterdämmerung*. Somehow we cannot forgive Wagner's bringing us down to a Finale of perfidy and meanness after the exalted atmosphere of his 'Scherzo.' Gunther and Gutrune interest us but little; good people as they are at bottom we dislike them for their interference with our heroes. Moreover, Wagner has not bestowed great care upon their characterization. Hagen, too, remains characterless, only motives of treachery and murder accompany him. The scene between him and Alberich at the opening of Act II nevertheless remains most impressive with its sinister portentousness.

There are other things in *Götterdämmerung* which, when we think of them singly, are apt to evoke superlatives; symphonic pictures of unforgettable impressiveness. The opening scene with the Norns (too frequently omitted) is a pictorial and tonal embodiment of the northern saga with all its weird gloom and legendary magic; the romantic sunrise on the banks of the Rhine in Act II (with the horns); the beautiful,

'GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG'

refreshing scene of the Rhine-daughters with Siegfried; the mysterious, tragic beauty of Siegfried's narrative and death; the extraordinary beautiful symphonic passage accompanying Siegfried's funeral train—and the final scene of Brünnhilde, that 'never-to-be-forgotten scene of terrible majesty and splendor,' which, as Lavignac truly says, 'words cannot describe.' Wagner has here used no other thematic material than that which has become familiar to us throughout the cycle, but with what force of inspiration, what ingenuity, what marvellous skill he has welded these elements together with the final cataclysmic symphony of world-redemption. The 'Flames' Spell,' 'Siegfried,' the 'Valkyries' Ride,' 'Hail to Love,' 'the Sword,' 'the Curse of the Ring,' 'Valhalla,' the 'Fall of the Gods,' 'the Rhine,' 'Loge'—all these ideas, summoned only by the power of tone, flash before our mental vision. The last theme, the keynote upon which the curtain falls, is that representing the 'Redemption by Love' and which though known to us since Walküre (Act III) stands forth in its full glory in this symphonic epilogue. A combination of themes representative of Wagner's most advanced polyphonic method is the remarkable feature of this final passage which Lavignac has analyzed in detail for the student.*

The spiritual elevation to which we have been brought by this close of the mightiest of all music dramas has made us forget the world and its sordid motives. We have been privileged to glimpse a world-ideal; our souls reverberate with an emotion that embraces all, soars over all; the magnitude and eternity of one idea has filled our consciousness, the idea of Redeeming Love. With a joy that is akin to awe we face life once more, and the spell which genius has cast over us is not shaken off in a moment.

* Lavignac: *op. cit.*, pp. 436 ff.

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IX

Rienzi was designated as a Grand Tragic Opera, the 'Dutchman,' *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* were Romantic Operas; *Tristan* was subtitled *Handlung* (Action, or Drama), and the 'Ring' a 'Stage Festival Play.' *Parsifal* the master characterized as a 'Consecrational Stage Festival Play' (*Bühnenweihfestspiel*). In a letter to King Ludwig of Sept. 28, 1880, Wagner wrote: 'Indeed how can and may any action in which the sublimest mysteries of the Christian faith are openly put on the stage, be performed in theatres like ours—it was with quite the right feeling for this that I entitled *Parsifal* a "Sacred Festival Drama." For this reason also I must dedicate a special stage to it, and this can only be that of my Festival Playhouse standing apart in Bayreuth. There and there alone shall *Parsifal* be performed for all future time: never shall *Parsifal* be produced at any other theatre for the amusement of the public! * * *

The 'public' has decreed otherwise. There is no further need for pilgrimages to Bayreuth in order to hear the crowning work of the master's genius. It has become the common property of opera managers the world over. We shall not attempt to say whether this is a desecration or not—we only desire to record the master's own attitude toward his 'legacy to the German nation.' It is necessary for us to know this in order to understand the nature of the work. It was the deliberate rounding out of a creative career that is without parallel. In it the master sought to demonstrate no new method, no technical advance over his previous works, but, having arrived at the fullness of his power, he desired to crown the achievement of his life, to consecrate it for posterity in a worthy and lofty spirit. That he turned to the Christian faith for his inspiration denotes not necessarily a dogmatic conviction, but the

'PARSIFAL'

fundamentally religious side of his character, and a deep reverence and appreciation for the ethical and æsthetic value of the most beautiful religious symbolism in the world.

The legendary cycle of the Holy Grail, upon which he had already drawn in *Lohengrin*, also furnished the material for *Parsifal*. Lohengrin, we remember, was the son of Parsifal and derived his power and mission from the mystic power of the Holy Grail, the sacred vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea gathered the blood of the Christ upon the Cross, and which, together with the sacred lance that opened the Saviour's side, had in the early years of strife been confided by the angelic host to Titurel, a knight faithful and pure. Titurel had built upon a high summit of the Pyrenees the sacred and magnificent castle of Montsalvat, to honor these sacred treasures, and gathered about him a brotherhood of pure knights, who consecrated themselves to the service of the Grail and the succor of the oppressed. Their king performs regularly the office of the Holy Eucharist. During this solemn rite the sacred chalice is uncovered, and glows with a mystic light, by its power the vessels of the temple are miraculously filled and the Brotherhood is endowed with new strength.

When *Parsifal* opens, great trouble has befallen the brotherhood. The aged Titurel, living on only by the power of the Grail, has delegated his kingship to his son Amfortas, who now performs the sacred office. Klingsor, an inhabitant of the country near Montsalvat, having sought admission to the brotherhood, but failed, since he is unable to root out of his soul sinful desires, has (after laying violent hands upon himself and so shutting the sacred gates for himself forever) listened to the counsel of the evil powers, and plotted revenge by means of sorcery. He has raised up a magic castle and created fantastic beings—half flowers, half maidens of ravishing beauty—who shall seduce all such knights of the Grail as can be lured into the sorcerer's precincts. He has, moreover, brought under his spell Kundry, who in a former incarnation was the Herodias that laughed upon the Saviour, and who is now condemned to expiate her sins upon the earth. In her ordinary existence she is an uncouth creature, strangely inarticulate, bent only upon service—service to the Grail and its knights;—when under Klingsor's spell, she is transformed into a 'woman of terrible beauty,' whom none can resist. The knights, of course, are

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ignorant of her double identity, though her periods of absence strangely coincide with the fresh misfortunes that befall the Brotherhood.

Amfortas himself, desiring to vanquish the wicked sorcerer to whose wiles many have already fallen victims, has ventured into the unholy precincts, and has there been ensnared by Kundry. While in her arms, Klingsor has robbed him of the sacred lance and with it inflicted a wound in Amfortas' side, for which there is no balm. The king has returned to Montsalvat, but the horrible suffering due to the wound is surpassed only by the spiritual pain of remorse, and the performance of the sacred office has become an agony that is unendurable. None of the balsams brought from far and near by the faithful knights and by Kundry (in her periods of expiation) are of avail. Only one thing can heal it: the touch of the sacred spear itself. Who shall regain it? In a most fearful hour of suffering and prayer, a voice has promised Amfortas the advent of him who is

‘made wise by pity,
The blameless fool,’

—in other words a being of pure impulse, armed with the power of ignorance, who shall conquer evil by resisting it, who shall be worthy to restore the power of the Grail and to succeed to its kingship. That one is Parsifal; his coming and his victory constitute the outward action of the drama; the awakening in his soul of compassion and the redemption wrought by its power is the ‘inner theme.’

Act I. The first scene depicts the region of Montsalvat (a woodland scene near the lake in whose waters Amfortas seeks alleviation) and vividly portrays the characters: Gurnemanz, the oldest of the knights, who tells two esquires and two of the younger knights the story of Amfortas' suffering; Kundry, who has brought a new balsam ‘from Arabia’ and is about to sink into the detested sleep that precedes the magic spell; the pitiable Amfortas, being borne to the lake; and Parsifal, the guileless, ruthless and impressionable youth, who kills a swan, and, on being reproached for it (for animals are sacred in the region of the Grail), breaks his bow. Parsifal knows neither his name nor that of his home, nor who his father was. Hearing from Kundry's lips of his mother Herzeleide's death, he attempts to strangle her. Gurnemanz has a faint hope that he may indeed be the chosen one.

The events of Scene II disabuse him of this idea. Through

PARSIFAL'

the mountain paths we see him lead the youth into the great hall of the temple (their progress being represented by moving scenery), where the love feast of the Holy Eucharist is about to be performed by the unfortunate Amfortas. The king pitifully begs to be spared this new suffering, but all the knights, as well as the subterranean voice of the aged Titurel, demand that he shall officiate. It is done; celestial choirs are heard, the dome is illumined and the chalice glows. The brothers pray, drink, embrace and file out solemnly, as they have come. Parsifal has stood with his back to the audience, in mute contemplation of the scene; Gurnemanz, however, finds no 'wisdom' in him and at the end of the act ejects him from the temple.

Act II. But we have seen him raise his hands at the sight of Amfortas' suffering. Infinite pity has awakened in his breast. Klingsor, the sorcerer, has also divined his mission and is already drawing him by magic toward his castle. Kundry, too, is once more under his spell, in order to perform the most difficult of her odious tasks: the seduction of the 'guileless fool.' She rebels, as Klingsor in the first scene summons her from the depths; but the magic is irresistible. In the second tableau, after the flower-maidens have attempted to cast their charms about Parsifal (who has suddenly appeared on the wall of the castle garden), she summons the most powerful means at her command. She plays upon the feeling of filial love which he has known: she calls him by his name, 'Parsifal'—as his mother had done—she clasps him in her arms, she implores, she presses upon his lips a long, passionate kiss. At this he revolts. Suddenly he feels at his side a terrible pain; in his mind he hears the wounded Amfortas' cry; he understands the nature of that suffering, and is seized with the deepest compassion. Kundry is powerless; in her rage she calls for Klingsor's aid; he appears and hurls the sacred lance at Parsifal. But it remains miraculously suspended above the hero's head. Parsifal seizes it, and with it traces a large sign of the cross—whereupon all of Klingsor's magic collapses: the castle falls in ruins, the garden becomes a desert, the sorcerer himself falls and Kundry lies prostrate. To her, who, while still tempting him, implored mercy at his hands, he cries: 'Thou knowest where thou shalt find me!'

Act III. Years have passed before they meet again. Parsifal has at last, after many trials, reached the region of the Grail. Gurnemanz, now a hermit, lives in a hut upon the opposite slope of the mountain from that of Act I. The repentant Kun-

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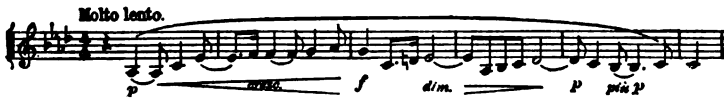
dry has already found her way thither and is discovered, her body cold and stiff, by Gurnemanz, who after bringing her back to life, finds in her face and gestures a new and strange humility—the humility of a Magdalen. She utters but one word—‘to serve.’ Parsifal, in black armour, lance in hand, appears and, stopping to rest, is recognized (and the sacred weapon as well) by the old knight, who is overjoyed at the sight. Parsifal now learns of the evil days that have befallen the Brotherhood: Amfortas, imploring for the release of death, no longer uncovers the Grail; Titurel, deprived of the miraculous nourishment, has died, and the knights are weakened and dejected. Parsifal blames himself for these misfortunes and is so moved that he is about to faint, when Kundry runs for water to refresh him. But Gurnemanz, instead, points to the sacred spring; and here follow the several symbolic acts reminiscent of holy scripture which lead up to Parsifal’s investiture: the baptism of the knight by Gurnemanz, his anointment, the baptism of Kundry by Parsifal and the remission of her sins. Solemnly the three go forth to the temple (Parsifal bearing the lance), where Amfortas, upon the occasion of his father’s funeral, has promised once more to perform the sacred rite. As in Act I he implores the brethren to spare him, and in his utter desperation he uncovers the terrible wound to arouse their compassion. At that moment Parsifal advances, touches the wound with the spear, and the wonder is accomplished. Amfortas, healed, now takes his place in the ranks of the Brotherhood, while Parsifal ascends the throne, uncovers the chalice, which spreads its glow through the hall as the new king waves it from side to side in token of benediction to the pardoned sinners—Amfortas and the ransomed Kundry. Celestial choirs are heard again and a white dove is seen to descend and hover over the anointed’s head.

Parsifal’s aloofness from theatrical conditions is, since its release, no longer valid, and at this time it is perhaps no longer so ‘difficult to apply to it the ordinary canons of criticism.’ But Mr. Streatfeild’s statement that it ‘stands alone among works written for theatrical performance by reason of its absolute modernity coupled with a mystic fervor such as music has not known since the days of Palestrina’ still holds good. It would, however, be useless to inquire into the means by which the master has achieved the extraordinarily

‘PARSIFAL’

lofty, uniformly noble and intensely devotional atmosphere which makes us forget that we are in an opera house at all. They are not technical means; they spring from the very soul of his genius and hence escape analysis.

It has been said that each of Wagner's operas (especially the later ones) maintains a distinct physiognomy in every measure. Despite its reminiscences of earlier works, *Parsifal* especially bears out this statement. There is an intangible something that sets it apart musically, from the opening of the prelude, with that impressive phrase symbolic of the Eucharist (strings and wood-wind) :



with its deliberate repetitions, to the last etherealized reiteration of the Faith motif :



woven about with glistening arpeggios of the harp. It is a 'sphere of harmonies that gives *Parsifal* its own serene style, the color of satisfied reminiscence.' 'Wagner's work was a circle,' says Dr. Bie in another place, 'which sought completion in itself, by returning into itself. *Parsifal* has the fatigue of that return. Its in-

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vention no longer bubbles from new springs, it satisfies itself from its past.' Thus, he points out, in the Grail motif, rising diatonically to the fifth above:



it leans upon a phrase of the Catholic service; in the last outpouring of the suffering Amfortas it even turns back, as if through sentiment, to Italian melody. The swan of *Parsifal* recalls the swan of *Lohengrin*, a major with an accompanying minor. From these chords, too, the lofty, solemn motif of the Grail prayer is formed. The chords that give the atmosphere of Rome to *Tannhäuser*, mixed with the sequence of fourths from *Meistersinger*, give us the motif of Faith and the music of the hovering dove. The chromatic dissonance of Tristan, which made the anger and desperation of Isolde, is utilized in *Parsifal* to portray suffering and pity,



as well as Kundry's twofold character:



‘PARSIFAL’

(Kundry's laugh)



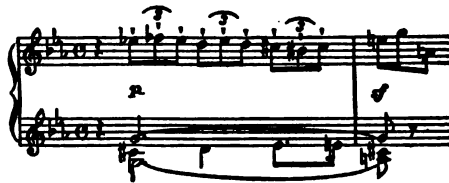
The Parsifal motif itself is based on the rhythmic chords of Siegfried in his scene with Wotan:



The bells of Montsalvat resound in ‘well-trying fourths’



and in the chord sequences above them we hear faint reminiscences of Nuremberg. The atmosphere that surrounds Siegfried in the forest, the hateful rhythms of the Nibelungs, the sensuous figuration of the Rhine-daughters, all lend definite elements to *Parsifal*: the first the fresh atmosphere of the forest, the second the pains of Amfortas, the third the seductive turns of the flower-maidens:



The ‘Good Friday Spell’ once more brings that undulating melodic line familiar in Wagner from *Lohengrin* to Walther's longing in the *Meistersinger*. Its idyllic atmosphere is, moreover, not far removed from that of the Waldweben in *Siegfried*.

We may add to this comparison (which is perhaps more enlightening than a mere enumerating analysis)

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only by pointing out some of the greatest passages of the score. Such are the choruses of knights and boys in Acts I and III, with their wonderful polyphony, their wide-spreading harmonies; the impassioned outbursts of the suffering king (Acts I and III); the strong scene of Klingsor and Kundry, shrouded in the sinister hues of magic and hate; the entrancing twelve-part chorus of flower-maidens with its charming waltz movement; the passionate scene of Kundry's attempted seduction, culminating in the kiss (Act II); and, most beautiful of all, the Good Friday Spell—in fact the whole scene of which it is a part—full of lyric beauty and poignant mystery from the awakening of Kundry to the bells of Montsalvat, as the scenery moves on to the last, most solemn scene of all.

Technically there is nothing new in *Parsifal*; the fact that Wagner has at last even given up the division into scenes is a mere outward change significant of the evolution toward complete unity of form. The orchestra has nothing new except the mechanical direction of a covered pit, its effects being calculated with respect to this. In regard to stage technique the moving scenery, doing away with the breaks between the different tableaux, and allowing the music to be continuous, only need be mentioned. But because of associations and its significance as the crowning work of the greatest master of the music drama, it will always occupy a place apart from all operatic works.

The text of *Parsifal* was first drafted in August, 1865. It was materially altered in 1877; in August of that year the composition was begun. With the exception of six months' interruption (Oct. to April, 1879), the master worked upon the composition almost continually till it was completed. The orchestration was finished on January 13, 1882, and the first performances took place at Bayreuth between July 26 and August 19, 1882. On February 13, 1883, the master died.

CHAPTER X

VERDI

Verdi and the Italian opera; the early operas—*Rigoletto*—*Il Trovatore*.—*Traviata*—Transition operas; *Un ballo in maschera*—*Aida*—*Otello*—*Falstaff*; Conclusion.

I

EXACTLY parallel to the phenomenon of Wagner in Germany stands the phenomenon of Verdi in Italy. For Verdi constitutes quite as much of a phenomenon in his way as Wagner does in his. In point of years they were truly contemporary—both born in 1813—but in another sense they were not contemporaries at all: Wagner had behind him the tradition of Beethoven, of Weber and the entire Romantic school, and, radical as he may appear, we have seen him to be merely a logical development of these forces; Verdi, on the other hand, had nothing to build on but the tepid efforts of the Bellini-Donizetti period, which represents, when all is said and done, about the lowest ebb of Italian music. Foreign influences were, as we have seen, almost negligible in Italy. The phantom of popular success so far overshadowed every other consideration that even a man of Rossini's extraordinary talent sacrificed every higher ideal for it. For a man to override that tradition of generations was indeed a phenomenal task.

Verdi proved himself equal to it, as only a man of his type could. He was a man of the people, not a *précieux* like his immediate forerunners; not a pleasure-seeking man of the world, not a *gourmet* of the Rossini type.

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He has been called 'the hottest-blooded man of passion the art of music ever knew,' a man who would err on the side of vigor, intensity and vulgarity rather than that of excessive *finesse*; a man who would not disdain to make use of popular melodies and who would seek to translate into music every popular passion; a man, in fine, who had in him all the elements of a popular hero and patriotic idol. And, finally, a man to whom tradition and æsthetic rules meant less than his own natural instincts and the dictates of popular appeal.

Not that Verdi disregarded these traditions. He was not a reformer, but a man of wonderful talent who, even within any given limitations, would produce something that was striking and significant. In this respect he resembles Mozart. He cared no more about the dogmas of Wagner than Mozart cared about the reforms of Gluck. Like Mozart he took forms as he found them and endowed them with new spirit, but (except toward the end of his career) he brought nothing essentially new. Like him, too, he was endowed with a dramatic instinct that permitted him to infuse the most obviously formal structure with throbbing life. Like him he was first and foremost a great melodist, subordinating the harmonic element to purely melodic expressiveness, but like him, again, he had a powerful harmonic imagination that leaned distinctly to the chromatic, and a marvellous polyphonic technique that he could summon at will to produce the most exquisitely intricate effects.

But in one respect his career was not at all like that of Mozart. He lived to the age of eighty-eight. And throughout that long career he wrought in comparative peace and quiet, and developed by steady degrees. No artist ever went through a more gradual and broad evolution. He represents the history of several æsthetic generations. His career clearly divides into four periods and each of them is equivalent to an entire artistic life. The products of each period would have consti-

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tuted a life's work, with the possible exception of the last, which makes up in quality for what it lacks in extent.

During the first period Verdi produced a number of operas, the best of which were on a level with the average products of the Bellini-Donizetti phase. Like them they have, one and all, disappeared from the répertoire. The first of them was *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*, produced in 1839, the first year of Donizetti's French operas. It contained the elements of Verdi's subsequently popular characteristics, though it adhered absolutely to the current forms and style. But in place of the 'vapid sweetness' of its contemporaries it had the rough, brutal energy peculiar to Verdi's earlier works. *Nabucco*, produced in Milan in 1842, made the composer's name known in Italy, and was followed by *I Lombardi* in 1843. *Ernani* (Venice, 1844) spread his fame throughout Europe. It is based on an adapted version of Victor Hugo's drama. With its crude sensationalism, this opera is the most typical of Verdi's earliest period. It may be said that it is the product of a fusion of the Rossini and Meyerbeer styles. Its immediate success was not altogether due to its intrinsic qualities. The strenuous melodies of the young master, often set to words that admitted of a patriotic interpretation (particularly in view of Verdi's known sympathy with the revolutionary cause), easily contrived to find an echo in the hearts of his countrymen. The audience used to join lustily in with the chorus '*Si, ridesti il leon di Castiglia*' in *Ernani*, and once the enthusiasm rose to such dangerous heights that the theatre had to be closed by the authorities.

Macbeth and *I Masnadieri* both came in 1847. *Macbeth* is interesting as a work of development. It surpasses most of Verdi's earlier efforts. Some of its declamatory passages prefigure *Rigoletto* and there is dramatic force in more than one scene. But the libretto,

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which Mr. Streatfeild characterizes as a 'miserable perversion of Shakespeare,' is a serious handicap to the work. *I Masnadieri* was written for London and its principal rôle was sung by Jenny Lind. Nevertheless it was a dismal failure and pronounced by a leading critic to be the worst opera ever produced in England. Certain things in *I due Foscari* (Rome, 1844) and *Luisa Miller* (Naples, 1849) are unmistakable signs of advance; especially in the latter, which occupied Verdi during a stay in Paris, and which profited by the influence of the French school, superior to the Italian of this period in scenic qualities and musical realism. Here the pretty melodies which he was wont to bestow regardless of the sentiment or atmosphere of a situation, give way to music in which depth and nobility of expression, temperament and passion show a stronger alliance with the meaning of the text. This is the end of his first period, and as such *Luisa Miller* marks an epoch. The librettist of the piece was Cammarano, who used a Schiller original for his basis.

Rigoletto opens the second period of Verdi's activity. *Il Trovatore* (Rome, 1853), *La Traviata* (1853) and *Un ballo in maschera* (Rome, 1859), besides a number of minor works are its fruits. Although by no means representative of the ultimate Verdi, these works are characterized by a style that is individual and fully formed. They have none of the uncertainty of a 'transition' period. Indeed all the works we have just mentioned are among the most popular of the master's works and as such call for a closer examination in this place.

II

Rigoletto is founded on Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse*, but in order to overcome the censor's objections the scene was moved from France to Renaissance Italy and the King, Francis I, was turned into the 'Duke of Mantua.' *Rigoletto* is the Duke's

'RIGOLETTO'

jester, a hunchback whose biting wit has created him many enemies among the courtiers. He has a daughter, Gilda, whom he keeps in an obscure neighborhood in order to shield her from the profligate influence of the court. The Duke has, nevertheless, discovered her (without knowing her identity) and, disguised as a student, has won her love. In the revel scene of Act I he tells his confidant, Borsa, of his conquest, which, however, does not prevent him from bestowing considerable attention upon the Countess of Ceprano, much to the discomfiture of her husband. One of the courtiers, Marullo, also has discovered the whereabouts of Gilda, but believes her to be Rigoletto's mistress. With Ceprano and the other courtiers he plots to abduct her, by way of getting revenge for the jester's taunts. In the next scene the abduction is accomplished, with the forced coöperation of Rigoletto himself, blindfolded, and under the eyes of the Duke, who has just left her embrace but is powerless to prevent the outrage. When, in the next act, the Duke (whose identity is now known to her) learns that his charmer is in the palace, he hastens to make himself known to her and to take advantage of her situation. Rigoletto arrives and soon turns the courtiers' scorn to fear, by revealing his real relationship to Gilda and demanding her return. She appears presently and, left alone with her father, confesses all. Rigoletto swears vengeance, but Gilda's love is steadfast. A bravo, Sparafucile, who has offered his services to Rigoletto in Act I (and incidentally beguiled him into a famous soliloquy), is now sought by the infuriated jester. The bravo has engaged to entice the Duke to his inn by the river bank, by means of the charms of his sister, Maddalena, to murder him and hand his body over to Rigoletto. In Act III the deed is to be done. Rigoletto has brought Gilda to witness the infidelity of the Duke (which is the occasion for the famous quartet). A fearful storm detains the duke at the inn for the night, thus giving Sparafucile the opportunity he seeks. But Maddalena's heart, too, has been touched by the noble rake. She pleads for his life, and finally induces her brother to promise to spare him if another person enters the inn that night, who might be murdered in his place and the body handed over according to the contract. Gilda has overheard this conversation from the street and determines to sacrifice herself for her lover. She enters the inn, is murdered, and her body, sown up in a sack, is delivered over to Rigoletto. The latter is about to hurl it into the river in triumph, when he hears the Duke's voice, gaily singing his '*La donna e mobile*.'

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Nonplussed, he opens the sack and in horror drags forth his own daughter. He sinks by her side, exclaiming, '*Ah, la maledizione!*' in recollection of the curse laid upon him (in Act I) by Count Monterone, whose daughter, too, had been dishonored by the Duke.

This lurid but strongly human plot Verdi has endowed with a musical substance that reveals at once his wonderful melodic imagination and his brutal vitality. Though still content to follow convention, he strikes out toward an essentially individual expression. For the first time, too, another influence besides the Italian tradition is felt: the 'mechanism' of the French grand opera. Already in the opening scene, preceded by a prelude that has been called an 'orchestral curse,' this is apparent. The sharp contrast of the frivolous and tragic elements is emphasized in the course of a series of excellent dance movements (on the stage), interrupted by the powerful curse of Count Monterone. Closely knit choruses support the conversation and the Duke's dashing, graceful '*Questa e quella*,' characteristic of his devil-may-care levity, stands out in charming relief. In the second scene there is the duet of Rigoletto and the bravo, '*Quel vecchio maledivami*, the voices carrying on their conversation in a bare *parlando*, while the orchestra provides the musical substance. Then follows Rigoletto's soliloquy, then the duet with Gilda, who mingles her suave melody with the suppressed pathos of the father. Gilda allays his fears, but after he is gone she opens her remorseful heart to Giovanna, the duenna. Left alone she sings her aria (and here Verdi is quite the Italian again) '*Caro nome che il mio cor*,' full of lovely and inconsequential coloratura. The abduction is the occasion for the famous chorus '*Zitti, zitti*,' in agitated whispers.

But in the jester's song of the second act Verdi rises far beyond tradition again. It is a masterpiece of irony, bitterest grief uttered in the lightsome accents of the

'IL TROVATORE'

jester's vocation, a melody torn in bits, like the father's heart. In *Cortigiani vil razza dannata* the composer—the dramatist—reaches one of his highest levels. The duet with Gilda, a skillful weaving of parts, and the vow of vengeance end the act. In the third act, the storm and murder scene arouses our admiration with its ruthless naturalism. Low fifths and high shrieks of wind set off the dismal background. Humming voices behind the scene, ascending and descending in minor thirds, variously harmonized, portray the howling tempest. A motive of the Duke flies through the air, like a lost fragment. A trio, twice rising to a climax, represents the surge of human passions. The raging storm brings the scene to its end—wordless and terrific. The Duke's '*La donna e mobile*,' sung during the first part of the act and again near the end, when its gayety becomes a terrible mockery, in the midst of a sordid tragedy, is the most popular piece of the opera, and still a leading war-horse of lyric tenors. It is so Italian, so genuinely popular in tone that the legend about Verdi's fearing to let it go out of his portfolio till the day of the dress rehearsal lest it be hackneyed before the performance, might be accepted as true—were it not for the fact that he has used its melody as leading motive in other places.

Of the *Rigoletto* ensembles—not forgetting the three beautiful duets (the first of Gilda with Rigoletto, the second with the Duke, a running series of melodies with double coloratura and a passionate ending, and the third again with Rigoletto)—the famous quartet is the crown and glory. In effect it is a double duet, for the two pairs are not cognizant of each other, while joining their conflicting emotions in one great tonal stream. The Duke sings his song; Maddalena and Gilda weave their motives together; Rigoletto shifts the harmonic base, while the Duke and Gilda draw the melodic contours. Now the Duke resumes his melody, Maddalena opposes hers and father and daughter provide the

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frame. Finally Gilda finds a trembling melodic line, Maddalena accents the predominating leading-tones, the Duke takes a new inner melody and the father provides the bass, stirred into a vivid phrase with every fresh melodic outbreak of Gilda. It is all dramatically significant, but most important of all, it is continuously beautiful. And so is the entire opera: it is this mellifluous quality that will keep it alive.

III

Il Trovatore, though of a later date, is not on a par with *Rigoletto*. It has had its day as the most popular of Verdi operas, but its hand-organ triviality has by now relegated it as distinctly second-class. To begin with, it has an impossible libretto. 'This misfortune of two brothers who fight for the same love has been set into so confused a story of gypsy robbery and revenge that only the most diligent philologist could reconstruct the original legend,' says Bie rightly. We shall not attempt to unravel this muddle here, but content ourselves with the merest outline of the plot.

The son of the Count di Luna has been stolen by the gypsy Azucena, in revenge for the Count's act in burning Azucena's mother as a witch. The abducted son has been brought up as Azucena's own son under the name of Manrico. He falls in love with Leonora, a lady of the Spanish court, with whom his brother, the younger Count di Luna, is also in love. Leonora returns Manrico's affection and the Count seeks to encompass the supposed gypsy's ruin. At length he captures him and condemns him to death. Leonora, in order to save him, consents to marry the Count. Manrico, however, refuses liberty under these conditions, and Leonora, to escape the fulfillment of her promise, takes poison.

The vulgar, brutal side of Verdi's genius, all the rude energy that gushed out of his earlier works unrefined,

'LA TRAVIATA'

is emphasized once more in *Trovatore*. Splashes of color, not tints; 'chunks' of melody, now solemn, now trivial, are passionately thrown together without much discrimination. Here and there are fundamentally dramatic passages—like the *Miserere* scene, or the scene in which Leonora poisons herself. But they are usually in close juxtaposition with mere operatic triviality, a cheap melodic tra-la-la. And yet it is its rich fund of melody that has preserved this opera so far—and will preserve it further. The fertility of Verdi's imagination is astounding. Nothing but melodies, just tunes—at times handled with the master craftsmanship that raised him above his countrymen. Sometimes the gypsy color gives him the cue, as in Ferrando's song of the two boys, or Azucena's song of the fire. But more frequently they are pure Italian arias, or Verdi arias (for his vigorous individuality is hardly ever hidden). Such pieces as Leonora's aria, in which she sings of the silence of the night, her coloratura love song, Manrico's fiery romanza, or the beautiful slumber song of Azucena, considered by themselves, are masterpieces of their kind. The ensembles are, in their way, still more remarkable. The trio at the end of Act I, the finale of Act II, culminating in Leonora's phrase *O in ciel*, sequentially reiterated, have the true Verdi sweep; the final scenes of Act IV, weaving melodies in skillful counterpoint while the dramatic vigor stays unimpaired, and finally, the wonderful *Miserere*—murdered by a thousand hand-organs and still alive—these things atone for much. That *Miserere* is the one really human passage in the whole opera—a rigid church chorus serving as background to the outpourings of Leonora and Manrico, who though separated, sing a love duet of passionate melodic fervor. Continuity is not one of the virtues of *Trovatore*. Let this indiscriminate review suffice to recall its qualities. When we go to hear it, we go to hear the good blood-red tunes—and forget the rest.

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IV

Il Trovatore and *La Traviata* in one year—what a contrast! From lurid melodrama to polite salon tragedy. And Verdi accomplished it without doing violence to his imagination. Where he was coarse before, he is now refined, though not without sentimentality; he adapts himself to the frivolity of the Paris salon, and with the intuition of genius sums up the essentials of social drama, this seemingly ephemeral phase of modern life, in an epitome of beautiful sounds, sifts out its eternal truths by means of an eternal art. Dumas' *Dame aux Camélias* loses nothing of her perennial character in this musical dramatization, in which Piave, the librettist, has an honorable share.

The story is almost too well-known to need rehearsing. Marguerite Gauthier, the beautiful, consumptive prostitute of Dumas' novel, has become Violetta Valery. In Act I she makes the acquaintance of Alfredo Germont, in the course of a brilliant reception at her house in Paris; Gastone de Letorieres introduces him. Flora Bervoix, the Baron Douphol, the Marquis d'Obigny, and Doctor Grenvil are among the guests. The newly-met chief characters fall in love; Alfredo becomes aware of Violetta's delicate health; Violetta, alone, deplores her own life of vice and dissipation. In the first scene of the next act, the lovers, after a three months' liaison, are in their villa near Paris. Financial difficulties are being allayed by Violetta's sacrifices. During Alfredo's absence, his father, in despair over the son's life (which is compromising his sister's prospects of conjugal happiness), begs Violetta to give him up. She agrees, after a struggle; and writes to her lover, who unexpectedly returns and becomes curious. She bids him an enigmatic farewell, later explained by the letter which she sends him after leaving. She has deserted him. In the next scene she visits her friend Flora in company with the Baron Douphol, whose mistress she has become, Alfredo is there. He gambles desperately. In a strained interview Violetta warns him of the Baron's violent jealousy, tries to explain her actions; he misunderstands and denounces her before the guests, to be de-

'LA TRAVIATA'

nounced in turn by his father, who enters at this point. Confusion. The last act pictures Violetta's last illness. From the doctor we learn that she is near death. A letter from Germont announces his coming with Alfredo, who knows all and will seek her forgiveness. He comes; reconciliation follows; and death soon after. General sorrow and remorse on the part of the father.

The prelude is short, in the usual manner of Verdi at this period. It pictures Violetta's sad death, with her farewell of love. The music of the festivities of Act I is a joyous background for the conversation, for the drama of love. An enchanting waltz is its climax. The dashing drinking song, sung first by Alfredo, then by Violetta, each followed by a chorus refrain, the little duet in which they join and which introduces the motive of their love, are two typical Verdi gems in this Verdian scene. Wonderfully contrasted is the great solo scene of Violetta, which ends the tableau. A recitative begins it; then the love aria beginning in F minor *Ah fors' è lui*; the love motive stands out proudly in the major; another recitative; then coloratura preluding the *allegro brillante*. In a whirl of dissipation she will find her solace: '*Sempre libera degg'io*.' It is according to the time-honored scheme: cavatina, cabaletta—slow, fast. But there is a new life in it; the force of passion genuinely felt, poured into a form of which the artist himself seems hardly conscious.

The dramatic substance of the second act lies in three duets. Violetta-Germont; Violetta-Alfredo; Alfredo-Germont. An aria by Alfredo at the beginning is just the conventional second-act tenor aria (*De miei bollenti*). The first duet has been given an ingenious psychological basis by Bie. He calls it a transition from the old style to the new, from the father to Violetta. The father begins by striking a conventional note, the orchestra interludes, Violetta replies more expressively, the orchestra supports her with understanding. They

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seek freer spheres, but the old man cannot get over his old-fashioned *staccati* and turns—when suddenly Violetta tears herself away with a glorious theme in D minor, with beautiful thirds, beautiful suspensions, and descends to a finely passionate lament in E-flat major, which the old man views more favorably. The orchestra helps again and both join in the beautiful G minor melody which forms the most charming contours. The second duet, between the two lovers, is short and psychologically pregnant. Violetta's grief is pictured in long-drawn suspensions; it becomes more and more passionate and pours all its strength into the F major passage. She bids him farewell with the love motive; a sharp, concentrated phrase epitomizes her grief. The third duet, between father and son, is a falling-off. The speech of the father in which he tries to comfort Alfredo by picturing the allurements of home, is trivial. Like the tenor aria at the beginning, it might easily be cut.

Another festive scene. Gypsy ladies (make-believe, but still as real as those of *Trovatore*) sing a chorus: '*Noi siamo zangarelle*'; matadors and picadors follow ('*Di Madride*'), and a charming Spanish dance. The Gambling Waltz supports the conversation, and Violetta's three outbursts. A pregnant, colorful scene between the lovers precedes the finale. Alfredo begins it, *Ogni suo aver*, the chorus breaks in '*O infamia orribile*'; Violetta joins; Germont enters with the largo: '*Di sprezzo degno*,' a beautiful harmonic surge, strong syncopation, sudden *pianissimi*, on and on it rushes as one great stream of conflicting passions ending in a great E major chord as the curtain falls.

The orchestra prepares the atmosphere for Act III. Motives of death in muted, divided violins. The whole act is a lyric scene on the French model, an innovation as far as Italy is concerned. As Violetta reads the letter from Germont, the love motive sounds, as from far away. Her grief is shared by the oboe, and presently

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she begins her lovely archaically flavored '*Addio, bel passato dei sogni*,' in A minor. Sounds of the carnival float in from the street. Alfredo enters and presently they have joined their voices in one of the finest love duets that Verdi ever wrote ('*Parigi o cara*'). A lovely trio, Violetta-Alfredo-Germont, gradually grows into an ensemble of all the solo voices, of sweet, pensive qualities. Once more the love motive is sounded in high tremolos, and Violetta dies.

V

Thus ends the greatest opera of Verdi's 'second period.' No convention has yet been broken; all is as formal and melodious as ever. But a freer spirit breathes through it all, and presently it will break its narrow bounds.

Yet the next period is a period of real transition and as such it did not fulfill the promises held out by its forerunner—except in its last product, *Aïda* (1871), which, in a sense, occupies a class by itself. The intervening works were *Les vêpres siciliennes*, written for the Paris Opera and produced during the Universal Exhibition in 1855. It was rather coolly received. It is obviously a *pièce d'occasion*, full of 'grand opera' glitter and show, and its overture was borrowed from an earlier opera, *Joanna d'Arc*. *Simone Boccanegra*, written for Venice (1857), was hardly more successful. It had an impossible text, which even in a revision by Boïto is not quite tractable. Much beautiful music was squandered on it and the revised version was endowed with an ensemble (first finale) that belongs to the best of Verdi's inspiration. *Aroldo* (1857), *Inno delle nazioni* (1862, London) were still less significant, but *La forza del destino* (St. Petersburg, 1862) and *Don Carlos* (Paris, 1867) have enjoyed considerable popularity. The former of these two had fine buffo choruses, grace-

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ful little songs and grotesque charms that were designed especially for the Russian audience but made the work immensely popular in Italy as well. The latter, written for the Paris Opéra, is again duly spectacular and excessively long. It, too, has received various revisions, but outside of France the work has not made much headway. In some respects it foreshadows *Aïda*, but on the whole it is an ungrateful mixture of stereotype and genuine feeling. The text was based on Schiller and had every dramatic possibility. The figure of King Philip is indeed a fine characterization and stands out among the dramatic achievements of Verdi's transition period. But, as we have said, the works of this period are hardly fulfillments in themselves; they have significance rather in connection with what follows.

Un Ballo in maschera (1858) rises above this slough of mediocrity. It is not without some of the shortcomings from which the transition operas suffer. But it has a grace all its own among Verdi operas, and it is even the chosen favorite of many a true Verdi connoisseur. It came four years after the 'Sicilian Vespers' (in 1859), and the troubles with the censor repeated themselves here. The opera had been ordered for Naples; the libretto was written by a Venetian, who had taken as his subject the assassination of King Gustav III at a masked ball. Auber had already written an opera on the subject, but that was forgotten. But Orsini's attempt upon Napoleon's life was remembered—and now all stage representations of regicide were forbidden. The censor had a new, officially sanctioned text prepared and wanted Verdi to make his music fit it. Verdi refused; refused the King's mediation, too. So Naples did not get its opera. But the scene was changed to Boston, the King into 'Riccardo, Governor of Boston,' and the opera was sanctioned in Rome. Dramatic absurdity never bothered the Italians; why should a mere historical detail annoy them?

'UN BALLO IN MASCHERA'

At any rate, Riccardo remains the man to be murdered. He is in love with Amelia, the wife of his secretary, Renato. Renato becomes one of a group of conspirators, who desire Riccardo's death. They draw lots to choose the assassin and the lot falls to Renato. He executes his charge at a masked ball.

Perhaps this opera does not merit detailed analysis. But there are moments in it that cannot be ignored in the development of Verdi. Riccardo's love song is of the most mellifluous, sensuous order. That its melody is repeatedly used as 'motive' is more important. Amelia's solo scene is filled with those short pregnant phrases, whose dramatic effectiveness points to modernity. The orchestra no longer anticipates the singer's phrase in the good old Italian manner; it frequently takes it from her lips and uses it in free development. There is a love duet, with lovely passages of ardor, of passionate longing. It grows into a trio, when Renato joins the two lovers. There is another trio—Amelia with the fortune-teller, and Riccardo in hiding. There is a quintet in the fortune-teller's hut, which at one time was one of the most popular of tunes. There is a great ensemble of conspirators, who sing a fugue among themselves and in counterpoint against the Governor's retainers. There are Barcarolles, songs of irony, things that recall Auber and Meyerbeer. There are better things—the Ulrica scenes in Act I, which have been said to stand on a par with 'the noblest of Mozart and the best of Rossini.' There is the music of the page, Oscar, who describes the fortune-teller in charming soubrette style. But, most important of all, there is an orchestra that indulges in independent tone-painting, a harmonic and polyphonic texture, an employment of motives that is distinctly modern. Significant contrasts are developed within the polyphonic ensemble, and the vocal element yields everywhere to the demands of the situation. When Riccardo dies, no aria is vouchsafed to

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him—his voice gives out in the middle of a word, on high B. We are approaching the last period of Verdi—the period of real modernity.

VI

With *Aïda* we enter upon Verdi's mature period. The fact that the master was in his fifty-ninth year when it was produced might make this statement appear ridiculous except for the extraordinarily broad and slow development of his genius. As a matter of fact he was as mature in *Traviata* as any other Italian composer of opera had ever been. But Verdi was simply an enigma of artistic longevity. He actually lived—and wrought—through several periods of the art's development. Judged as a parallel to his contemporary, Wagner, he reached with this opera a stage corresponding to *Lohengrin*: mature in general manner but by no means exhausting the ultimate resources of his style. In fine, he did not even here abandon the traditional forms of Italian opera (any more than Wagner abandoned those of the German Romantic opera in *Lohengrin*), but he made these forms entirely subservient to the matter in hand. He broadened his technique in accordance with the musical resources of the time, availed himself of the common store to which Berlioz, Meyerbeer and Wagner had contributed, and, without becoming an imitator of any one of these, applied the new pigments to the canvas that Scarlatti, Rossini and Bellini had used. This he did with a genius that recalls Mozart's, for no more than Mozart does he appear as a reformer—at least by outward signs. Not till *Otello* and *Falstaff* does he abandon the outward features of the inherited forms. These two, indeed, are in his truly mature—that is ultimate—style.

Aïda was written in response to an order from Ismail

VERDI'S 'AÏDA'

Pasha, Khedive of Egypt—not for the opening of his Cairo opera house (for that took place in 1869) but for the greater brilliance that the Pasha aspired for it. The price of 100,000 francs that Verdi asked (and meant to be prohibitive) in no wise phased the Pasha. He selected Mariette Bey, the eminent French Egyptologist, to find a suitable story and that scholar chose an incident of ancient Egyptian history, which was adapted by Camille du Locle for the proposed opera text, with the personal coöperation of Verdi. Signor A. Ghislanzoni translated the French prose into Italian verse, and this in turn was re-translated into French for the subsequent production in Paris. The first performance took place under extraordinarily brilliant and cosmopolitan auspices at Cairo, Dec. 24, 1871. It was repeated in Milan in the following February and soon spread all over the civilized world, and with it the fame of Verdi as a recognized modern composer.

The action of the opera is briefly as follows: Amneris, the daughter of the Egyptian king, loves the warrior Radames. Her slave, the captive Ethiopian princess, Aïda, also loves him and her love is returned. The Ethiopians, under the leadership of Aïda's father, Asmonasro (whose relationship to the beautiful slave is not known to the Egyptians), are about to invade Egypt. Ramphis, the high-priest, declares that the God Isis has selected the leader of the army of defense, and the king presently announces that it is Radames. In another scene he is solemnly consecrated to the task and receives his arms. In the second act (first scene, in Amneris' apartments) Aïda betrays her love to the jealous princess, who threatens her with destruction. In the second scene Radames returns victorious, with a band of Ethiopian prisoners in his train, among them Asmonasro. Aïda rushes into her father's arms and begs for the release of the prisoners, which, with the help of Radames, she obtains—except for Asmonasro, who is made a slave like herself. In gratitude for the victory the king bestows Amneris' hand upon Radames, to the consternation of the latter and Aïda. In the third act the princess visits the temple of Isis on the banks of the Nile. It is a moonlit night. Aïda and Radames meet near the temple, but ere the warrior arrives Aïda's father, having

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discovered their love, induces her to betray her lover into revealing a military secret. While Aïda tries to lure Radames to flight, Asmonasro, eavesdropping, learns what he desires to know. He steps forth and makes himself known. Amneris, who has overheard, emerges from the temple and is assaulted by Asmonasro but saved by Radames, who surrenders himself to the high-priest, after urging Aïda and her father to flight.

In Act IV Radames is tried by the priests. In a chamber near the place of judgment Amneris offers her intercession if Radames will abandon Aïda. He refuses. She hears the accusation, hears her beloved condemned to death and curses the priests as they pass out with their prisoner. The last scene shows the temple above and the vault in which Radames is immured below. Aïda has found a way to join her lover in death and they die in each other's arms, while Amneris, in mourning, enters the temple above and sinks prostrate upon the cover of the vault.

There is in this libretto every opportunity for emotional expression, for brilliant scenic effect, for gorgeous tone-painting; it is just the sort of opera that Meyerbeer would have been glad to set. But there is in it little that would have inspired a Wagner, no 'inner' drama, no *Vertiefung* of any kind, only a crass juxtaposition of scenes. That Verdi did not follow the Meyerbeer model is in itself to his credit; that he did not approach the Wagnerian method is obviously not to be counted against him. There have been, indeed, critics who have seen in his employment of motives, in his dissonant harmonic scheme, in his colorful—sometimes blatant—orchestration an imitation of the Bayreuth master. But their voices have long been drowned by those who claim for Verdi not only the greatest originality but also a musical and dramatic genius comparable to that of his great contemporary. Comparisons are out of order here. Let us say, however, that Verdi does not employ leading motives in the Wagnerian sense, viz., as an extra-literary commentary upon mental processes, or emotional states, but merely as labels for his characters, or in reminiscence of past happen-

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ings; and that he does not utilize them in symphonic development. As for his harmonic texture, it was inevitable that he should profit in a general way from the Wagnerian technique of free chromatic development, of advanced dissonance, of bold modulation and generally richly sensuous, colorful and varied substance. But it must also be recorded that he brought back into Italian music something of the splendor of the polyphony of Palestrina. It is well known how, about this time, the master's table was constantly covered with the scores of Bach. Finally, as for orchestration: Verdi here for the first time made an attempt at reproducing in tones the rich colors of the Orient. As no doubt in his harmonic evolution he was influenced by the North, so he was indebted here to the method of the masters of French opera and ballet. But out of all this he concocted his own mixture, 'a mixture that emanated no longer from his style, but from the very source of his musical feeling'; and through it all remained decidedly and unmistakably Italian.

The melodies are those of an Italian, they are vocally inspired and their leadership is assigned to the voice. But, while the orchestra rarely dominates the melody, its accompaniment is rarely stereotyped. It is undergoing a process of individualization that again suggests German influence. For the first time the bass clarinet is used (in the judgment scene, upon the entrance of Radames). The ensembles, though learned and skillful, are still those of an Italian, but they combine the characters more truthfully, they respect contrasted feelings. The chorus even is Italian in its handling, but besides its typical, broad melodies it interposes many an isolated phrase to promote the action. The recitatives are still Italian, but they throb with dramatic passion while their orchestral background is full of variety and meaning. The bald recitatives of old Italian opera have disappeared at last. It is all Italian, but the Italian phrase,

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even when it betrays its ancestry, is freshly conceived, newly felt. It is the new Italy that speaks out of these pages, the Italy of Verdi's successors is heard here for the first time: and the language is still unsurpassed. In this respect the importance of *Aïda* cannot be overestimated; we may believe with Mr. Henderson that 'it is as certain as anything in art history can be that this production revolutionized modern Italian opera, and that to its influence is due the composition of such works as *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I Pagliacci*.' *

From generalities we pass rapidly to some essential details. The prelude proclaims the difference between Verdi and the 'grand opera.' It is a modest, tender, almost timid piece, whose delicate chromaticism suggests almost the mood painting of an impressionist. The short, harmonically resolute dialogue of Ramphis and Radames leads us directly into the latter's expressive romance of love (preceded by a brief recitative accompanied by martial heroics): '*Celeste Aïda*,' whose last F in the accompaniment is carried by ethereal violins into the soft, caressing melody with which Amneris opens the scene between herself and Radames, and—a little later—Aïda, whose steps are guided by her tender, chromatic motive (already suggested at the opening of the prelude). The first of the five scenic ensembles, martial and somewhat bombastic, follows. '*Ritorna vincitor!*' it ends in an enthusiastic rising phrase. '*Ritorna vincitor!*' echoes Aïda as she begins her wonderful solo scene, a series of conflicting emotions, bared before us in the most melodically expressive recitatives, supported by the most harmonically expressive orchestra. The declamatory first section rises to a climax of diminished sevenths as the mental picture of her father as an Egyptian captive rises before her. In a lovely convex melodic curve she prays for her

* W. J. Henderson: Preface to the Vocal Score of *Aïda* in G. Schirmer's edition.

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country's safety, for defeat of the foe. A horrified 'Ah!' as she contemplates the meaning of her words, brings a stronger climax than the last; and the orchestra sings her tender motive as she thinks of her love. She joins in the second part of the phrase and develops it into a lyric passage of great beauty. The key changes; in an agitated pianissimo passage, now rising, now falling, we feel the anguish of her heart as she thinks of father and lover at once. Then, after her sob '*vorei morir*' she enters the calm atmosphere of prayer: pianissimo tremolos in the strings, of almost Lohengrin-like ethereal shimmer, support her *cantabile* of—we cannot help it—Elsa-like sweetness. '*Pietà, pietà, del mio soffrir!*' she breathes in detached motives at the end—and the celli softly echo her despair. We have chosen this scene for detailed analysis, for it shows Verdi's dramatic maturity, the power of his inspiration so clearly. Many other passages might be cited, but this one is typical.

The first finale is the grand temple scene. It is filled with exotic splendor and bold ethnological characterization, and carries a conception of the cast-iron rigidity of ancient religionism. The chorus of Amneris' women which opens Act II is in charming contrast to this, but also exotic in color. Amneris interposes an occasional phrase of longing. A Moorish dance of fleet pizzicati divides the scene in two. The duet of the two rivals in love, Aïda and Amneris, has been called the 'farewell to the old Italian duet,' for the conflict of the characters is sharply emphasized; their voices do not simply combine in pleasant sounds: they stand irreconcilable even in their melodies. With the same sweet passage that closed Aïda's solo scene she closes this.

The second finale, which follows here, is the grandest of them all. It is the grandest in all Italian music. Even taking into account the blatancy of all that stage brass (which seems to be calculated for an Egyptian

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out-of-doors, but is too, too much for the average opera house), and some rather bombastic passages, we must still admire the marvellous imagination that brings all that splendor upon the scene and into the score, with a variety that forestalls satiety. The majestic theme of the homage to the king, the lyrical episode, sung by the women to contrast it; the ponderous fugue of the priests; the spirited march with the brilliant sudden change from A-flat to B major, the colorful ballet are each masterly in their way. Now the homage of the people and the chorus of priests combine and the lyrical passage is repeated fortissimo. Radames is crowned. Asmonasro's scene leads to the central ensemble in F which is a marvel of contrapuntal ingenuity. Amneris is bestowed on Radames. The popular joy is resumed in the first theme of homage. The priests' theme repeats, too, passes into a *stretto*, and to the orchestral ending, a repetition of the march. Perfect form and infinite variety—this ensemble is worthy of study.

Act III brings the duet of Aida and her father. Again they do not join their voices, in restless dramatic dialogue they dispose of their business. But the two lovers, further on, are different. Their souls and their melodies are one. His melody is of heroic pride, hers romantically exotic, shimmering harmonies and colors of the orchestra accompany it. They join their voices in a new phrase, *assai vivo*, and finally take up his heroic melody in unison. Amneris' entry and Asmonasro's outbreak bring the act to a rapid close—too rapid perhaps for comprehension.

Two more duets give the substance of Act IV. Radames and Amneris hold their momentous counsel in the first: he in serious, strong accents; she in soft feminine pleadings. But they unite where they shouldn't—a reminiscence of operatic manners. In the second the summit of pathos is reached. Aida joins her lover with

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a dull tone of resignation, accompanied by drum taps and low clarinets. Their emotions rise, Radames sings, accompanied by the wind, Aïda, accompanied by strings. Heaven's hosts greet them from afar. The chorus in the temple above breaks in sullenly. Unearthly beauties open themselves in their G-flat major melody; new unearthly joys fill their hearts. The earthly chorus is far, far away, the violins weave a thread that becomes thinner and thinner, four of them sing caressing melodies, they combine on one, *pppp*, softly, almost unheard: '*Pace, pace!*' implores Amneris above; '*Immenso Phta!*' murmur the priests.

We have omitted the judgment scene. Double basses and trombones introduce it. The solemn unisons and soli of the priests fit well into its hieratic rigidity. Muffled drum taps indicate the silence of Radames, and Amneris breaks out in a phrase three times repeated, each time a semitone higher. We see clearly that Verdi is a great dramatist; genius is written on every page of *Aïda*.

VII

Sixteen years intervene between *Aïda* and *Otello*. None but those close to the master could have suspected that a new period of activity was possible. But the mental vigor of the 'grand old man' was not to be exhausted. He could not view the march of artistic events without the keenest interest. Youthful of brain, modern in feeling, he primed himself for a new effort in the spirit of the age. And the result showed that he had not been idle in the interim. Where his style showed evolution before, it now showed a conscious spirit of reform.

The master of Bayreuth had been dead four years. His works had found growing acceptance in Italy since the first performance of *Lohengrin* in Bologna in 1868.

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The 'young Italy' group of revolutionists centred in Milan had done a great deal of shouting to very little purpose. And incidentally they had denounced Verdi as the 'hand-organ man.' But that was before *Aida* was thoroughly known and the 'Mazzoni Requiem' studied. Now, in 1887, Verdi dispelled all doubts as to who should be the 'saviour' of musical Italy, for in *Otello* he not only advanced another mighty step forward in technique, but he definitely and openly abandoned the forms that had determined the nature of Italian opera since Scarlatti.

In this reform he had the intelligent advice and collaboration of Arrigo Boïto, poet, musician and Wagnerite. Boïto arranged Shakespeare's immortal tragedy as an operatic text, and we have the opinion of an English critic that it is a 'masterly condensation' and in every way worthy of the original. We follow Mr. Streatfeild in our synopsis of it.

The action opens in Cyprus, while a tempest is raging. Otello returns from a victory over the Turks, is greeted by the people, and a great bonfire is lighted in his honor. In the drinking scene which follows, Cassio is plied by Iago and, intoxicated, fights with Montano. They are interrupted by Otello, who degrades Cassio from his captaincy, and dismisses the people to their homes. The act ends with a love scene between Otello and Desdemona, the words of which are 'ingeniously transplanted from Otello's great speech before the senate.' In the second act Iago advises Cassio to obtain the intercession of Desdemona and left alone utters his terrible 'Credo,' a confession of his unbelief. (This is one of the few parts not directly derived from Shakespeare and is called by Streatfeild a 'triumph' on the part of the librettist.) Otello enters and Iago at once speaks of Cassio's interview with Desdemona, thus arousing Otello's jealousy. Desdemona herself enters, receives an offering of flowers from a band of natives and by her pleading for Cassio further confirms Otello's jealousy. He thrusts her from him. Her handkerchief, with which she has offered to bind his brow, is secured by Iago, who, once more alone with Otello, pursues his intrigue to such good purpose that his chief appeals to Heaven for vengeance

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upon his wife. In the third act he accuses her openly of unchastity, laughs at her indignant denial and is presently supported by the evidence of the handkerchief which Iago, entering, says he has found in his chamber. Iago contrives that Otello shall recognize it and shall only hear that part of the conversation which shall confirm his belief. The arrival of envoys from Venice recalling Otello and appointing Cassio in his place, fans his rage into madness. He strikes Desdemona and drives her from the hall. His brain reels and he sinks to the floor, as the crowds before the palace acclaim him as the 'Lion of Venice.' Iago, with his heel on the swooning man's breast, cries ironically, '*Ecco il leone!*' In the fourth and last act Desdemona sings her 'Willow Song,' and, with sinister foreboding, bids Emilia a pathetic farewell. Immediately after she falls asleep; Otello enters by a secret door, wakes her with a kiss and after a brief scene smothers her with a pillow. Emilia enters to tell of the attempt on Cassio's life, finds Desdemona dead and calls for help. Cassio, Montano and others rush in, Iago's treachery is uncovered and Otello, in despair, stabs himself, pressing a last kiss upon Desdemona's lips as he dies.

We have spoken of Rossini's *Otello* as the one in which he abandoned the 'dry recitative' of the Italian opera. Verdi in his *Otello* abandons the aria. There are no set arias in the opera. Even such great dramatic moments as the scene of Cassio's dismissal pass without a typical aria formation. There are beginnings of what might be arias, there are aria motives, there are song-like sections and there are measured 'conventionalized' melodies, but no arias. The chief melodic staple is a free-flowing recitative, copiously accompanied, and by its side that short, incisive type of dramatic phrase which Verdi has liked in previous operas but which is consciously cultivated here. Finally the aria has been, so to speak, 'sucked up' by the recitative with its tremendous intensity of expression, in what Bie calls a 're-birth of the *accompagnato*.'

So much for the melody. The harmony has advanced apace. Parallel harmonic figures, such as we find them notably in contemporary Italian music, sequences, not

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only of sixths, but of minor sevenths, and unrelated major triads in diatonic sequence have become formula. The orchestra has become a closer and more animated participant than ever before. Now it weaves charming arabesques into the dialogue, now it ornaments it with chains of suspensions, or with broken chords. It follows the text with untiring alertness. Not only does it punctuate the phrases and sentences in the old Verdi manner (and more copiously); it interprets, broadens, intensifies, enframes. It achieves in its independent functions a coloristic expression that goes beyond realism and borders on impressionism.

And yet it must be recorded that *Otello* is again a transition opera, and as such has certain tentative traits and a certain lack of decisive character that goes with them. Here and there his shaking off of convention does violence to the matter; here and there the new manner is unaccustomed and awkward; and here and there the old convention comes in and spoils the unity of the work. Hence it will perhaps not achieve the popularity of *Aïda*, and has less claim upon the reviewer for detailed analysis. The chorus of the tempest scene, which opens the opera, after a bold, revolutionary passage of realism settles down to a series of ensembles that cannot deny their formal character. The drinking scene which follows is one of the passages suggestive of impressionism, with its sipping chromatics, its wavering major thirds, shifting accompaniments and drunken mixture of voices. The *Otello-Iago* duet is the leading instance of the new dramatic style, the new intensity of the recitative which has absorbed the aria. The love scene of *Otello* and *Desdemona* 'of flawless loveliness' is supported by the softest harmonies; sequences of sevenths, tremolos and harp add to its voluptuous charm. It ends on the caressing kiss motive (which we shall hear again in *Otello's* death scene). *Iago's* 'Credo' is the most remarkable solo scene in the

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opera, terrible in its demoniac grandeur. *Otello* and *Iago* end the act in the conventional spirit of revenge with conventional triplets to make sure of effect. The 'Handkerchief trio' is remarkable for the symphonic treatment of its orchestra, though not in the Wagnerian manner. Here follows the second *Otello-Desdemona* duet with its gloriously proud melody, and its terrible irony. The third duet of the two leading characters is the centre of the last act. It is steeped in the deep colors of tragedy. As *Otello* enters the threatening double basses, warning orchestral motives, guide his silent steps. The duet takes up their rhythm. The tragedy moves swiftly to the end. Motives continue their ironical reminiscence, while he kills her—and himself.

VIII

But *Otello* was not the end. After deepest tragedy—lightest mirth. Wagner wrote his *Meistersinger* under the stress of trouble, Verdi his *Falstaff* when the trouble and the strife were over—as a man of eighty, conscious of having done his life's work, in the enjoyment of a contented life's evening, a passionless, keen-witted, intellectual ripe old age. Instead of turning religious, or sentimental, this mental giant reached the pinnacle of his wisdom in that rarest of life's gifts: good humor.

Boïto again was his mentor. He did with Shakespeare's 'Merry Wives' relatively what he had done with 'Othello'—condensed it, eliminated some things (in this case the scene of disguise) and added some (drawing upon 'Henry the Fourth,' as in the famous paraphrase on 'Honor'). The whole thing lives, and lives in the spirit of Shakespeare.

The three acts are each divided into two parts. In Act I, Part I, *Falstaff* and his trusty followers, Bardolph and Pistol, are driving their ribald sport with Doctor Caius, whom they

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have just robbed and who, like them, has sought refuge in the Garter Inn at Windsor. After the Doctor's exit the fat knight unfolds his latest plan of obtaining money by making love to the two wealthy wives, Mistress Ford (Alice) and Mistress Page (Meg). He has written identical letters of affection to the two, which he wants Bardolph and Pistol to deliver. But they revolt; their 'honor' forbids abetting such an act! Falstaff, furious, drives them out of the room and, left alone, holds his discourse on honor. The letters shall be delivered by his page. The second part plays in Ford's garden. Alice and Meg meet and compare notes. They are identical. With Nannette (Alice's daughter) and Dame Quickly they plan revenge as they leave the stage to Master Ford, with Dr. Caius, Fenton (Alice's lover), and Bardolph and Pistol. These two, having turned traitors, reveal Falstaff's amorous project. Master Page's jealousy is aroused. Both groups pursue their plots up-stage, while Nannette meets Fenton in a love scene, which is soon interrupted by the return of the other women. They are left to themselves for another delicious few minutes, and then the men return and reveal their scheme: Ford will visit Falstaff in disguise and lure him into the trap. The women (up-stage) join their voices to the men's and presently come forward to laugh over the prospect of *their* revenge. In Act II Dame Quickly delivers Alice's note, making an appointment, to Falstaff. He is delighted and will meet her between the hours of two and three. Next, Ford, disguised as 'Master Brook,' arrives to tell Falstaff of his hopeless passion for a haughty dame, Mistress Alice Ford, and to beg him to woo her with his irresistible charms so that, having once yielded, she may be induced to do so again—to the speaker. Falstaff informs his visitor that his will shall be done, that in fact he already *has* an appointment with the lady, and pockets the money that 'Master Brook' has offered.

Part II plays in a room in Ford's house. After a scene among the women, Falstaff enters. His interview with Alice is quickly interrupted by Dame Quickly's announcement that Mistress Page is at the door. Falstaff hides behind a screen, but the joke threatens to become serious when Mrs. Page rushes in to announce Ford's approach, mad with jealousy and on the hunt for his wife's lover. Ford arrives, searches the basket of 'foul linen' intended for Falstaff, finds nothing. During his search of other parts of the house Falstaff is hidden in the basket. Ford and his followers return; they hear suspicious noises behind the screen, consult and find Nannette and Fenton,

**Verdi's 'Falstaff': Sketch of Setting for Act III, Scene 1, by
Scomparini, and Facsimile of a Page from the Manu-
script Score**



all. vivace m. 8-116 *all. vivo m. 117*

2. Canto *Andante dell'opera della Germania*

Primo *Andante molto più lento*

Secondo *Andante molto più lento*

Terzo *Andante molto più lento*

Quarto *Andante molto più lento*

all. vivace m. 8-116

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who have slipped behind the screen to steal a few moments' bliss. Now Mrs. Ford calls on her servants; upon her command they lift the basket with the greatest difficulty and dump it out of the window into the Thames, while the jealous husband is led to the window by his wife to see the result. Act III finds Falstaff in sombre mood outside the Garter Inn. Wine cheers him, and Dame Quickly has no difficulty in restoring his confidence in her mistress. He will keep the strange tryst: under Hearne's oak in Windsor Forest at midnight.

The magnitude of the hoax which is to be played on Falstaff is soon revealed by the conversation between the Fords, Meg, Fenton, Doctor Caius, etc., whose ensemble closes the act. Incidentally, however, Master Ford himself is to be fooled (as we shall learn from the words of Mistress Ford in the following scene). He has planned that his daughter shall be wedded to Dr. Caius; his wife will see that Fenton is the happy man. The second part of Act III brings the dénouement. We are in a moonlit glade of the forest. Alice, Nannette and Fenton arrive first; then Falstaff, with his antlers. A brief tête-à-tête with Alice is ended by her slipping away at the first sign of trouble. Soon Falstaff is surrounded by 'fairies' and 'goblins' of all sorts. In the end he is introduced to Master Ford, undisguised, and promptly repents. Master Ford gives his blessing to Nannette and Fenton, whom Alice has so disguised that he shall be mistaken for Doctor Caius. They all take their defeats gracefully and end the piece in a 'merry round' which Falstaff begins.

In order to understand modern Italian music one should know *Falstaff*. And to know *Falstaff* means to study it. It is no longer the Italian opera that can be divided into so many pieces, each of which may be judged according to our tastes. In a sense it is not opera at all. Verdi calls it lyric comedy. It is a work of unity, a marvellous picture that would seem to have been painted in a day (except for its magnitude), a wonderful mirror of sensitized sound that has been held up to life. The spontaneity of the work, its unceasing vividness, with all its intricacy, science and marvellous crowding of detail must arouse the wonder of every musician. The charm of that mobile mass of sound, the

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grace, vivacity and expressive beauty of its details should, one would think, fascinate every listener. And yet *Falstaff* is not so popular as the earlier Verdi operas. Probably because the music lover has come to think of Verdi as a melodist pure and simple, because he cannot get the Verdi of *Trovatore* and *Traviata* out of his mind. For the kind of music that *Otello* and *Falstaff* are made of he would rather go and hear Wagner. What a mistake! With all his eighty years, with all his marvellous musicianship, Verdi is younger, fresher, more charming in this work than in any other. True, he no longer writes arias; mere tunes interest him no longer; it is all phrases, motives (harmonic as much as melodic), reiteration, development, subtle allusions, tone-painting, separate and cumulative effects, characterization. But it is music still, even form has not been thrown to the winds. No sentimentality, no romantic lyricism to be sure; but music as clear as crystal, sparkling rhythms, prismatic colors. And it is all individualized: phrases stand by themselves, rhythms express, motives characterize, instruments imitate. It is a resuscitation of the old *buffa* with all its wit, sparkle and innocent charm, but clothed in a cloak of modernity, a substance of rich intellectuality.

We have said that to know *Falstaff* one must study it. It cannot possibly be described; its parts are too intimately associated to bear singling out; we can endeavor only to point a guiding finger at random spots. The scene between Falstaff and Doctor Caius (with Bardolph and Pistol as accessories), and that between Falstaff and the two followers are one round of rollicking mirth, his own discourse on honor a masterpiece of humorous musical soliloquy. Through it all the music fairly laughs, titters, reels and frolics, every orchestral phrase has a humorous or comically pictorial purpose. The women in the next scene gossip and giggle together while the orchestra comments significantly upon their

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speech. The reading of Falstaff's letter is mock sentimentality mixed with surprise; its most sentimental phrase becomes the women's farewell nod at the end of the act. There are no set arias, duets, pieces of any kind, no scene divisions; only one continuous stream of dialogue, interjection, voice combinations. And yet this 'part' is in perfect symmetry: three ensembles, first the men's, then the women's, then all together (the nonet). Between them the love duet of the two young people, a beautiful undulating melody with lovely farewell calls at the end, shifts its first and second part. The latter motive is the frame of it all. Part I of Act II again divides itself symmetrically into five parts. Alice's and Fenton's love behind the screen forms the centre, Falstaff and Mistress Ford are on either side, before and after, and two ensemble scenes stand at beginning and end, the last one a masterpiece of concerted music; all the voices in tuneful confusion with the chorus underneath. The second part of Act III is musically the crown of it all. The mystery of the sleeping forest is exquisitely reflected in the orchestra; with its 'unearthly beauty' this music ranks with the tone-painting of the German romanticists. In the fairy music Verdi again excels himself. 'Nothing so delicate, nor so fully informed with imaginative beauty, has been written since the days of Weber,' if we are to believe Mr. Streatfeild. The ensembles grow in confusion and intricacy and yet they flow along with an ease that gives no hint of their difficulty. To top it all, Falstaff's 'merry round' becomes a tremendous fugue with ten solo parts and a four-part chorus participating, while the orchestra plays an independent accompaniment.

Of the things the orchestra does in this score we cannot begin to speak: instruments parodizing each other, imitating the voice, weeping, laughing and what not. The thousand colors of a prism shine through this score, the harmonies that are locked within its two covers are

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infinite in their variety. Good-bye to the harmonic subservience to Italian melody, good-bye to naïve simplicity of texture, good-bye to monotonous basses. Restlessly shifting root-progressions, ever changing modulations, chromatics, enharmonics, augmented triads, unrelated triads, high dissonances, secondary sevenths, unresolved sevenths, chains of suspensions, now of languorous sweetness, now of biting dissonance; all the mechanism of modern harmony and polyphony is here. Good-bye to the old Italy of the *buona melodia* and *bella semplicità*, of *coloratura* and *fermata*. Long live the regenerate Italy whose musical pasture is the world. Master Verdi has awakened you.

CHAPTER XI

THE RUSSIAN OPERA

Character and early growth of Russian opera—Rise of nationalism—Glinka and Dargomijsky—Moussorgsky: *Boris Godounoff*; *Khovanstchina*—Rimsky-Korsakoff: *Snegourochka*; *Sadko*; 'The Golden Cock'; Borodine's 'Prince Igor'—The Cosmopolitans: Seroff; Napravnik; Rubinstein—Tschalkowsky: *Eugene Onyegin*; 'Queen of Spades'; Cui and other eclectics; the 'moderns.'

I

WITHIN the last ten years the western world has become conscious of the existence beyond the Niemen of an operatic literature able to stand beside that of any in the world's history. Modern Russian opera is one of the most important departments of the musical nationalism which has developed in Russia since the invasion by Napoleon in 1812. All the power which the patriotic ideal injected into the nation's art is felt in these lyric dramas. No important characteristic of modern Russian music is absent from them. The great operas of the east which have recently been performed in Paris, London and New York have astonished their audiences in the highest degree. Nothing since Wagner has proved a more startling awakening. These works are essentially spectacles on the largest possible scale, mounted with barbaric richness of color, and supported with every possible sensuous and imaginative appeal. The masterfully colored orchestration of the Russian composers is here represented at its best. The mystical power of the Slavic folk-song, which has formed the web and woof of most of modern Russian music, is no-

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where more poignant than in these operas. The Russian performances have also made known to the western world the marvellous Russian bass voice, and the superb choral singing which in some of the Greek Orthodox churches is developed to its highest degree of perfection. The Russian acting, too, can compete with any acting the world over in truth and illusion. Finally, the Russian operas have shown to the world the dazzling and barbaric stage settings of such master artists as Bakst, Benois and Golovine. The whole group of influences, admirably fused by the expert Russian stage directors, have produced an incomparable effect.

Russian national opera has been one department of modern Russian music, but by no means a mere offshoot of it. Opera has for a century and a half been an established part of Russian life, and so popular has it been that nearly every composer of importance has written one or more works in that form. The Russian instinct for dramatic performance is no less strong than that of the Italians. The theatre flourishes in Russia as in no other land. The Russian soul, which is incurably subjective, continually delights in dramatizing itself. So Russian music, when it approached maturity, inevitably veered toward the stage. And dramatic music had the more influence, because Russia is the land of all lands where a work of art means something more than appears on the surface. Just as political conditions assisted *Der Freischütz* on its road to popularity, so the social undercurrents in Russia connected themselves in a hundred different ways with the great national operas and gave them prominence if not prosperity. Thus Russian national opera flourished not only because it was beautiful, but because it was national.

But, as in other departments of Russian art, the path toward complete nationalism of expression was long and devious. In the seventeenth century Russia was all

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but barbarian. In the eighteenth she vibrated between French and German in her official culture. The whole cultural history of this century is one of the imitation of this and that foreign model, with a touch of local color or feeling appearing here and there and promptly suppressed, so far as was possible, by the censor. It was the Napoleonic invasion that made Russia officially Russian. Thereafter it was fashionable, even in the highest circles, to cultivate the speech and customs of the people, and national expression became inevitable. Yet it was fifteen or twenty years before this expression could become in any way definite. Mrs. Newmarch * tells with painful completeness the various steps in the development of national music in Russia, listing scores of long works which were no more than the stumblings of little children. The story of dramatic performances begins, as might be expected, in the churches. With the Czar Alexis Mikhaïlovich, in the middle of the seventeenth century, we find embassies continually being sent to the western lands to pick up artists of one sort or another to arrange plays or musical performances at the Russian court. The first stage play, written by a German Protestant pastor residing in Moscow, was 'The Acts of Artaxerxes,' given in 1672; record says that it lasted ten hours in performances. Then came more of these plays, interspersed with songs and choruses, for the sake of resting a tired audience's nerves, and with the piece 'How Judith Cut off the Head of Holofernes,' we find enough music to justify its title as the first Russian opera. But 'opera' here, as generally for the century following, means *singspiel*, or dialogue-play interspersed with songs and concerted numbers. 'Judith' was in seven acts and twenty-nine scenes, in addition to a prologue and an interlude.

Thereafter, for some years, the story of Russian musical drama is that of foreign entrepreneurs and artists

* Rosa Newmarch: 'The Russian Opera.' London and New York, 1914.

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who came to Muscovy lured by the fascination of an undeveloped country, or perhaps hired by the sovereign. Peter the Great fostered the drama, bidding Russians of all ranks to attend 'as they pleased, quite freely, having nothing to fear,' and further directed that during the performance of plays musicians were to play 'on divers instruments.' Theatres were built, both for drama and for opera. Italian opera gradually became popular in Moscow. Operas were composed, to French, German, or Italian (and occasionally Russian) texts, and imported or wandering musicians made some little fame for themselves. Seroff says that these operas were commissioned from the wig-makers and barbers who hung about the court. But it is evident that the talent was not all of this order, since among the distinguished visitors who during this period left their impress on Russian musical life we find the names of Sarti, Paësiello, and Cimarosa. Gradually native playwrights of eminence, like Trediakowsky and Kapnist, began to serve as librettists. With E. P. Fomin (1741-1800) we find the first opera composer of Russian birth. His light opera, 'The Miller,' to a libretto by Popoff, is recorded to have had twenty-seven consecutive performances, and each time with a full house. Fomin's earlier *Aniouta*, produced in 1772, is given as the first Russian opera. In these works there was a cautious use of native folk-song, which awoke great enthusiasm in the audience. Among the other distinguished opera composers of the time Mrs. Newmarch mentions Francesco Araja (1700-1759); Vassily Paskievich; Vicente Martin (1754-1810); Giuseppe Sarti (1729-1802); Maxim Berezhowsky (1745-1777); Dmitri Bortniansky and finally, the most influential of all, Catterino Cavos (1776-1840). Alexis Verstowsky (1799-1862), Joseph Kozkovsky (1757-1831) and Alexander Alabieff (1787-1851) are mentioned as having contributed especially to national feeling in their operas.

GLINKA AND DARGOMIJSKY

II

In all the history of Russian opera from this time on there are two grand currents—the romantic and the realistic. These two currents flow from two great pioneer works, embodying the ideas and theories of two great Russian composers. These men were Glinka and Dargomijsky. The two were equally national composers; equally genuine as artists, and equally great in their fruits. Glinka represents the lyrical and romantic trend; Dargomijsky the declamatory and realistic. The former offers the first mature expression of Russian nationalism in music. The latter was the first Russian Wagnerian—or music-dramatist in the modern sense. Every one of the later opera composers was deeply influenced by one or the other of the two, studying their scores and hallowing their memories. In inner influence it was perhaps Dargomijsky who was most fruitful, for he saw further into the future, demanded more, strove harder, and by his theories levelled a more difficult challenge at the young composer and disciple. But in equal degree it was Glinka who had the great external influence. He produced the first great national opera which was universally recognized as such, and awakened the demand which was later to be gratified by such a glorious list of works. He provided all composers with a working model, and set a standard in the creation of musical nationalism, not with formal means, but with the inner artistic sense. It was he who made Russia a fertile field for the production of national opera, and he who in large measure taught the subsequent composers their trade.

Michael Ivanovich Glinka was born on June 2, 1804, the son of a small landowner. After study in Vienna and Berlin he returned to Russia, an accomplished musician, filled with a high seriousness for the future. In

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St. Petersburg he found himself in a patriotic atmosphere which had been fostered by the immense popularity of the poet Pushkin. Himself an ardent patriot, he saw as his mission the composition of a national opera. The scenario of 'A Life for the Czar' was worked up by himself and a friend or two, and its execution was entrusted to a certain Russianized German, tutor of the heir apparent, one Baron Rozen. Glinka worked rapidly at the music, and carefully rehearsed the various sections in private. Pronouncing the results satisfactory he endeavored to secure its performance at the Imperial Opera, but met with difficulties. Overcoming these, with the help of the composer Cavo, he had the good fortune to engage the interest and enthusiasm of the Emperor. 'A Life for the Czar' was first performed on November 27th, 1836, and its success was immense. Official approval and popular enthusiasm combined to make him one of the most eminent men of the day in Russia. After this success a lesser artist would have sought to secure his prosperity by more works of the same stamp. But Glinka, who was possessed of a restless creative spirit, saw his musical ideals changing and sought to embody them in a work which should be no less national, but more truthful to the best possibilities of opera, as he saw them. He paid the penalty of the artist who is too sincere, for his second important stage work, 'Russlan and Ludmilla,' though musically a finer work than 'A Life for the Czar,' met with critical disapproval and popular indifference. Hurt in spirit by this injustice, Glinka forsook opera, and before long went to live abroad. He died in Dresden on February 2, 1857.

'A Life for the Czar' embodies the fierce loyalty to the emperor which is still a characteristic of the Russian peasant class. The action takes place during the Russian war with Poland in 1633 when the Poles sought to place their own pretender on the Russian throne in place of Michael Feodorovich,

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first of the present Romanoff line. A detachment of Polish soldiers is sent to Moscow to put the young Czar to death. On their way they enter the hut of the loyal peasant Ivan Sousanin, who, suspecting their intention, leads them astray in the forest, while he sends his young son on to the capital to warn his sovereign. The Poles finally realize that they have been duped, and put Sousanin to death. The second act passes in Warsaw, where Glinka attempts to set forth the Polish character, in contrast to that of the Russians. The last act is filled with patriotic feeling. In its first scene, in a street in Moscow, the people are hurrying to acclaim the young Czar, and the unfortunate children of the dead Sousanin are shown in contrast with the joyful populace. In the final scene, at the entrance to the Kremlin, the Czar salutes the dead body of Sousanin, while the crowd sings its song of praise.

The music of the opera seems likely to continue for many a year its hold on the affections of the Russian people. Without making any extensive use of literal Russian folk-tunes Glinka managed to imbue much of the opera with national characteristics and feeling. A Russian audience never fails to thrill with patriotic fervor at the third-act quartet: 'God Love the Czar,' at Sousanin's aria: 'Thou Comest, Dawn!' or at the great choruses in the last act. Mrs. Newmarch points out a sort of leit-motif which runs through the work, occurring first toward the end of the opening act, where Sousanin sings a phrase to the words taken from the old Russian *Slavsia* or Glory Song. She also notes an extensive use of old Russian modes, as well as direct quotations from folk-songs in various recitatives by Sobinin in the first act. Again, the patriotic chorus in the first act is led by a precentor, after the Russian fashion, and another chorus is accompanied by the strings pizzicato to imitate the *balalaïka*. But these imitative touches are less significant than the subtle spirit of nationalism which Glinka has been so successful in infusing into the music throughout. Sometimes the end is gained by a peculiar twist of harmonization, some-

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times by a national mode of modelling the melodies. But we must not forget that 'A Life for the Czar' is essentially based on the prevailing style of Italian opera. It would be false to compare the work with the intense nationalism, for example, of *Boris Godounoff*. The work has its arias, its recitatives and its choruses in the Italian manner, and in general follows the conventional rules of harmony. Often the music is obviously thin and un-national. In many ways Glinka was a cautious workman, especially in the matter of scoring. He dispensed with the 'luxuries' of unusual instruments, and obtained his effects by an expert manipulation of familiar means. But so delicate was his feeling, and so pregnant his creativeness, that Rimsky-Korsakoff has said he obtained a good portion of his musical schooling from the editing and study of Glinka's scores.

Glinka's second great opera, 'Russlan and Ludmilla,' is no less national than 'A Life for the Czar,' but was so much further advanced in point of musical treatment that it evoked little response from those for whom it was chiefly written. The story of the beautiful princess, Ludmilla, who is snatched from her bridegroom by a wicked wizard and restored through magic wiles, comes from national folk-lore. But the libretto was obscure and disjointed. It is probably on this account that the work has failed to hold its place in Russian opera houses. And this in spite of the music, which is filled with Russian feeling, and reflects in a masterly way the picturesque quality of the story.

Alexander Sergievich Dargomijsky, who supplemented and in some degree opposed Glinka's artistic ideals, was nevertheless a friend and disciple of the elder composer. He was moved by Glinka's patriotic feeling, and learned much from 'Russlan and Ludmilla.' But he early recognized that he was to tread a different path. 'The more I study the elements of our

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national music,' he once wrote, 'the more I discover its many-sidedness. Glinka, who so far has been the first to extend the sphere of our Russian music, has, I consider, only touched one phase of it—the lyrical.' In his humor, particularly, Dargomijsky considered Glinka un-Russian. Further, Dargomijsky, even before he became acquainted with Wagner's later works, had formulated his ideals of declamatory truthfulness. 'I want the note to be the exact equivalent of the word,' he wrote. Thus he made himself the pioneer in the second great ideal current of Russian opera—the declamatory and realistic, which came to its finest fruit in the music-dramas of Moussorgsky.

Dargomijsky (1813-1869) was in many ways like Glinka. He was born of fairly well-to-do land-owning parents, received a good musical education, entered the government service, became a talented dilettante, travelled abroad, deepened his purpose and improved his technique, and comparatively late in life commenced to work toward the highest ideals. His first opera, *Esmeralda*, based on Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, was written in the style of Meyerbeer and Halévy. It was performed in St. Petersburg in 1847, and gained considerable popularity. A ballet, 'The Triumph of Bacchus,' was refused by the director of the opera, but Dargomijsky was already at work upon a national opera of great import. 'The Roussalka' was produced at the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1856, but proved too novel for the public and gained little success at the time.

The work was based, in point of musical style, on Glinka's 'Russlan and Ludmilla,' and was even superior to it, but it by no means represented Dargomijsky's ultimate ideals. For in the years following its failure, the composer was studying Pushkin's poem, 'The Stone Guest,' based upon the Don Juan legend which had been so brilliantly used by Beaumarchais

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and Mozart. He was unwilling to cut or alter the text for operatic purposes, so he carried out to the full his principle of exact textual fidelity. 'The note' was to be 'the exact equivalent of the word.' In the years of failing health Dargomijsky worked on this *magnum opus*, finishing the composition of it literally on his death-bed. The orchestration he intrusted to Rimsky-Korsakoff, for he had previously formed the most cordial relations with Balakireff's 'neo-Russian' group. The work was performed in 1872, but proved so far in advance of its time that it gained but a cold reception. Nor have later audiences treated it much more hospitably, though Russian composers have drunk endless draughts of knowledge and inspiration from its pages. 'The Stone Guest' is not likely to be heard on any stage outside of Russia. But 'The Roussalka' is a work which in its romantic beauty may well appeal to any audience in Europe and America.

The story is based on folk-lore. A young prince falls in love with Natasha, daughter of a genial old miller. But considerations of state compel him to marry in his own class, and he leaves the girl desperate. She throws herself into the mill-stream and is turned into a *Roussalka*, or water-sprite, who inhabits the streams and plays with passing travellers much after the manner of the German *Lorelei*. The old miller goes mad and hovers about the scene of the tragedy. Some years later the prince passes that way and stops to reminisce before the stream. A little *Roussalka* appears from the stream and tells the prince that she is his daughter, and that she dwells with her mother among the water-sprites. All his old passion is reawakened. He stands before the stream uncertain whether or not to join his first love. But the miller appears and executes vengeance by throwing him into the water.

In the music Dargomijsky carries out to a considerable extent his theories of connected dramatic music, with expressive recitative. But the work is essentially romantic and must be so judged. The choruses are charming examples of national romantic feeling. The

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music allotted to Natasha is somewhat weak, but that given to the old miller is masterly. Here Dargomijsky had his opportunity as a psychological musician, in depicting the crafty, humorous old peasant, who later grows into a fearful and almost heroic instrument of divine vengeance. He has made the part one of the finest in all Russian opera. At the hands of a singer like Chaliapine it becomes overpowering in its intensity. Dargomijsky's folk-humor is exemplified in the recitative of the professional marriage-maker in the second act: 'Why so silent, pretty lassies?' and the answering chorus of the young girls. But all this is quite unlike the musical style of 'The Stone Guest.' This work was described by a contemporary as 'a recitative in three acts,' and the epithet is just. The musical treatment is almost altogether declamatory, with a recitative following conscientiously the emphasis of the text but preserving its subtle melodic and expressive values. So far the work is Wagnerian in intention. But Dargomijsky was no imitator of Wagner. He made but slight use of the leit-motif and in particular kept the orchestra down to a subordinate part in the music-drama. In the actual music there is scarcely anything to suggest Wagnerian influence. On the other hand it is prophetic of the style of modern France. It contains perhaps the first example in musical history of the use of the 'whole-tone scale.' Its use of dissonance is daring in the extreme, and its variety of dramatic-musical device almost inexhaustible.

III

After the waning of the popularity of Tschaikowsky, who has proved the way-shower of Russian music to western nations, Modeste Moussorgsky has come to be recognized as incontestably the greatest and 'most Russian' of the Russian composers. This great disciple of

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Dargomijsky was one of the most human musicians who ever lived. Endowed with a creative faculty which stands among the greatest of the century, he penetrated to the heart of Russian music and Russian character, and worked with a lofty devotion to the highest ideals toward a result which is, on the whole, as brilliant as anything in modern music. He accepted with renewed intensity Dargomijsky's dictum, 'I want the note to be the direct representation of the word.' But this was far more to him than an artistic principle. It was an expression of his love for humanity, especially of the great mass of the common people which is the hero of his operas and the great moving force in modern Russian literature. In a letter written about the time of the performance of *Boris Godounoff* he writes: 'Assiduously to seek the more delicate and subtle features of human nature—of the human crowd—to follow them into unknown regions, and make them our own; this seems to me the true vocation of the artist. Through the storm, past shoal and sunken rock, make for new shores without fear, against all hindrance! In the mass of humanity, as in the individual, there are always some subtle impalpable features which have been passed by, unobserved, untouched by any one. To mark these and study them, by reading, by actual observation, by intuition—in other words to feed upon humanity as a healthy diet which has been neglected—there lies the whole problem of art.'

If Tchaikowsky is in many ways similar to the novelist Turgenieff, we may with equal justice draw a parallel between Moussorgsky and the novelist Dostoievsky. In these two we find the same intense sympathy with the human equation, the same delving into psychological recesses, the same grand sweeps of poetry arising out of the human heart, the same fierce reliance upon exclusively Russian materials, and the same psychological intensity which inevitably seems to the foreign

'BORIS GODOUNOFF'; 'KHOVANSTCHINA'

reader to be morbid. Just as Turgenieff the cosmopolitan prepared the way for Dostoievsky in foreign lands, so Tchaikowsky the cosmopolitan prepared the way for Moussorgsky. And in both cases the genius of the master towers far above that of the 'voice crying in the wilderness.'

The life of Moussorgsky (1839-1881) was strikingly like that of Glinka and Dargomijsky. He too was born in the country, picked up a dilettante musical education, entered the government service (as a member of the fashionable Preobajensky regiment), shone in salons as a musical amateur, was suddenly inspired with a new vision, and spent the remainder of life working towards an ideal only half appreciated by his contemporaries. But it is to be noted that in this case it was no foreign influence which turned the amateur into the artist. For by this time Russian music had grown to maturity. The influence that inspired Moussorgsky was none other than that of Balakireff, whose word was a flame to all who heard him. It was in close association with the 'neo-Russian' group that 'Boris' and *Khovanschina* were planned. For several years Moussorgsky shared rooms with Rimsky-Korsakoff. And it was the ever loyal Rimsky-Korsakoff who accepted the office of orchestrating and revising the work of his friend. Moussorgsky's operas are the fullest expression of the generous ideals of the group of Russian nationalists who have written such brilliant pages into musical history.

Moussorgsky's first efforts toward dramatic music were unsatisfactory. He wrote some incidental music to 'Œdipus,' very little of which has survived; then a considerable portion of an opera founded upon Flaubert's *Salâmbô*, some of which was incorporated into later works. Still later he completed one act of a projected 'dialogue opera' based on Gogol's comedy, 'The Match Maker.' But Moussorgsky's three complete and

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mature operas are *Boris Godounoff*, *Khovanstchina*, and 'The Fair at Sorotschinsk.' The last was not performed until the spring of 1914, when it was given at the Private Opera in Moscow.

Boris Godounoff was written between 1868 and 1870 and after some difficulties was accepted by the Imperial Opera and produced on January 24, 1874. A considerable clique sought to effect the failure of the work, but an equally determined group of young artists saw to it that it received its due applause, and the ultimate success was so great that it had twenty performances and the choruses were sung on the streets. After that it fell for some time into oblivion, and not until it had had several revivals with distinguished casts was it fully appreciated as one of the two supreme works of Russian operatic literature.

The other is *Khovanstchina*. Before 'Boris' had reached the stage Moussorgsky, with Stasoff's encouragement, was at work on this new music-drama. But it progressed slowly. For all the time, until the last two years of his life, the composer was earning a precarious living as a government clerk, and was permitted to give only his spare time to art. When Moussorgsky died, none of the orchestration had been written out, and the final scene was only sketched. Rimsky-Korsakoff completed the work faithfully, and recently the French composer Ravel has added touches to the scoring. Still more recently the Russian composer Stravinsky has written an alternative for Moussorgsky's final scene, which was obviously weak and unfinished. The work required an even longer time than 'Boris' to gain for itself full appreciation in Russia.

Boris Godounoff is not so much an opera, in the Western sense, as a series of spectacular pictures drawn from Russian history. The story has become almost a part of Russian folk-lore, and as such was written in loose dramatic form by Pushkin. Moussorgsky, a pro-

MOUSSORGSKY: 'BORIS GODOUNOFF'

found admirer of Pushkin, wished to include in his work the essential scenes of Pushkin's poem, and did, in point of fact, use several long passages almost in their original form. But the opera, so arranged, gave little opportunity to the soloists, aside from the part of Boris, and allowed scarcely anything to the feminine rôles. At the instance of Stassoff and of the director of the opera, Moussorgsky added two whole scenes for the sake of feminine and sentimental appeal, and inserted a number of other passages into the scenes already planned, in some cases writing the words himself. For this reason the work seems especially disjointed and patchy. We seek in vain for a formal plot or a connected story. But the work is nevertheless unified in its way, for the various pictures of the time, all highly typical, form one magnificent frieze.

The story, such as it is, is that of the Tartan upstart, Boris Godounoff, who gained great power in the councils of the Czar Ivan the Terrible, and was made regent during the minority of Ivan's son. But he contrived the murder of the heir, Demetrius, and, after feigned hesitation and reluctance, ascended the throne. Once he had attained his ambition his conscience began to trouble him. And when there arose from out of the west a claimant for the throne, pretending to be the murdered heir, Demetrius, his fears preyed upon him morbidly day and night. Boris began to pray that the false Demetrius might prove to be the true one, that he might be free from the guilt of murder. But the lieutenant whom he had commissioned to execute the murder assured him that the lad had actually been killed, and Boris died of terror at the menacing visions.

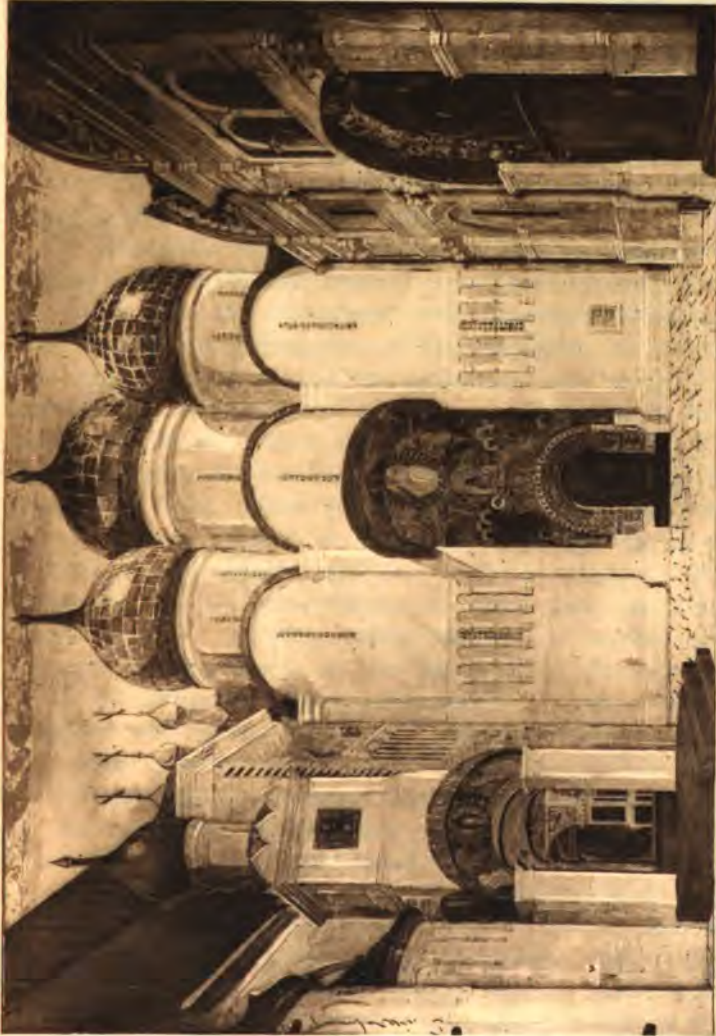
In the first scene, in a street in Moscow, the people are mourning the state of Russia, whose royal line has been extinguished, and are begging Boris to take the throne. He appears and refuses. The second scene, taken almost in its entirety from Pushkin, shows a lonely cell in which the monk Pimen insinuates into the mind of the young monk Gregory that he is the true Demetrius, son of the dead Czar. In the third scene Boris accepts the crown and is joyfully acclaimed by the populace. The fourth scene is an inn on the frontier of Lithuania. The false Demetrius, accompanied by two royster-

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ing tramps, enters, on his way to Moscow to proclaim himself the true Czar, and narrowly escapes arrest at the hands of the police. Next we see the palace of the Czar, with Boris in conversation with his young son Feodor, and later receiving reports of the uprising of Poland on behalf of the false Demetrius. Already conscience has begun its deadly work. The two scenes following are those inserted for the sake of feminine appeal. There is festivity at the home of the noble Polish lady, Marina Minishek. In the course of the scenes Marina talks with a Jesuit priest who knows of the pretender's attentions to her and hopes through her to make the Roman Catholic religion the official faith of Russia. The second scene closes with a love duet between Marina and Gregory. The next scene shows Boris, surrounded by the Boyards, considering measures of state. An interview with Pimen dispels any possible hope that the true Demetrius may not after all have been murdered, and the Czar, after saying farewell to his son, falls dead. The last scene shows the gathering of the people to support the pretender, and the acclamation of him as he approaches with his army. This final scene is usually played before the one preceding, in order that the opera may end with the death of the chief figure. But Moussorgsky's intention in placing the scenes as he did is evident. Boris, for all the interest attaching to him, is a subordinate figure. The hero of the opera is the Russian people. It is the people which dominates the last scene, as it did the first, enframing a national drama which is greater than any individual.

The music of *Boris Godounoff* exercises a peculiar magic over the hearer. Only to a slight extent does it use actual Russian folk-tunes, but no work was ever more intensely national in treatment. Not only in his modal melodies, and their harmonization, but in the counterpoint, which suggests the extemporaneous counterpoint of folk-singing, does Moussorgsky preserve the Slavic spirit. His expression is so direct that not a note or a bar could be omitted from the music of the great scenes. Yet the composer, who is constantly seething with creative energy, looks forward in some passages to the music of the twentieth century. The introduction to the third scene, imitating the bells of the Kremlin, is one of the first passages of true 'at-

**'Boris Godounoff,' Act I: Setting of the Metropolitan Opera
House, New York**



MOUSSORGSKY: 'BORIS GODOUNOFF'

mosphere' in musical history. From this scene, as also from certain of the Moussorgsky songs, the modern French composers learned a valuable lesson. Certain passages, however, are weak, notably the grand chorus of the last scene, unfortunately transplanted from Moussorgsky's early *Salâmmbo*, and in general the festival scenes and love music of the sixth and seventh scenes. Moussorgsky was never a composer of love music. He wrote these scenes as an after-thought, and under outside pressure.

The general method is that of continuous recitative and melody, with the formal arias and choruses occurring where the emotional note becomes dominant. But, true to the principles of Dargomijsky, Moussorgsky makes slight use of the *leit-motif* and keeps the orchestra subordinate to the voices. There is, in fact, only one phrase which could be called a leit-motif—that occurring during Pimen's recitative in the second scene—but this, which primarily stands for the false Demetrius, is diffused so generally through the work that its precise significance as a motif is obscure. The orchestra, while subordinate, is very rich in 'comment,' and the scoring, while simple, is varied and powerful. The score, as we have said, was revised in a later edition by Rimsky-Korsakoff, who altered and polished with great freedom. This has caused much discussion among musicians. Rimsky-Korsakoff held that Moussorgsky's technique was faulty, and that some of the passages would have been laughable if not touched up by an expert hand. But it is certain that much of the writing to which Rimsky-Korsakoff took exception was not due to any lack of knowledge on the part of the composer, but to deliberate intent. The reviser has softened many passages, and, in the opinion of some, has robbed them of their original intent and full power. While no one doubts his sincerity or loyalty to his old friend in so doing, many still question

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his wisdom. However, it is the Rimsky-Korsakoff version which is performed in opera houses, and on this the fame of the work will continue to be based.

It is difficult to point out the best portions of *Boris Godounoff*, for, with the reservations already made, the work is pure gold throughout. But we should mention at least the great choruses—the highly colored concerted numbers of the first scene, the joyful *Slavsia* of the third, and the wonderful folk-like chorus of the last. The songs of the hostess of the inn and Varlaam's description of the siege of Kazan in the fourth, are filled with racy humor. The narrative of the boy Feodor to Boris in the fifth scene is justly famous for its delicate child-like expression. And finally there are the great monologues of Boris himself, one in the fourth and another in the last scene, which, as sung by a great artist like Chaliapine, reach a pitch of emotional intensity which has never been surpassed in the history of opera.

We have spoken of *Khovanstchina* as standing on the same artistic plane as *Boris Godounoff*. Because of lack of space we must comment briefly on it. Like the earlier work it is essentially a collection of pictures out of history—this time from the period of Peter the Great, who sought to reform and Westernize Russia by imperial edict. The old aristocracy, as well as the conservative party in the church, fought him to the end. The opera is a series of pictures of this bitter struggle. The figure of Peter himself does not appear (although Moussorgsky had originally planned that he should), but his influence is over it all. In the centre of the resistance are Prince Ivan Khovansky, typically a fanatical, half-oriental and conservative Russian; and the *Raskolniki*, or religious sect of the 'Old Believers,' who fought against the innovations in church organization, and especially against the purification of the official Bible from the errors of mediæval scholarship. Old

MOUSSORGSKY: 'KHOVANSTCHINA'

Prince Khovansky, with his pomp and ceremony, is a most impressive figure. Dosistheus, leader of the Old Believers, is a character who seems to have stepped out of an epic poem. Perhaps Moussorgsky's most successful woman character is the passionately religious Martha, filled with fierce self-sacrifice, mysticism and prophecy.

The music is much simpler than that of 'Boris.' It is so severe, so reduced to its essential elements, that it might almost have been written by Bach. Yet it loses none of its passion, its color, or its dramatic force by comparison with the earlier work. The prelude, a tone-picture of the sunrise appearing on the towers of the Kremlin, is one of the most magical of all Moussorgsky's works. In the first act, the followers of Prince Khovansky sing a chorus which is ever memorable for its pomp and color. The divining song of Martha in the second act is a masterpiece of long drawn and impressive melody. But it is surpassed by the simple folk-song which Martha sings in the third act, repeating it to an accompaniment which ever changes and deepens.

The close of this act reveals Moussorgsky's nationalistic genius at its very highest. The populace enters—first the men, who are drinking and carousing, and then their women-folk, who spare no energy in beating them for their sins. This number, in which traditional Russian folk-rhythms are used with striking effect, recalls one of Moussorgsky's most masterly songs, the *Hopak*. A servant of Prince Khovansky enters on the balcony and announces to the crowd that the cause of the old order is lost—that Peter's soldiers are approaching the city. Instantly the mood of the people changes, and they sing a heart-rending lament for Old Russia—a chorus which cannot be equalled in the whole range of Russian music.

In the fourth act Prince Khovansky is in his palace, being entertained in regal barbaric style. The ballet

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music of this scene is splendid in its melancholy. As the old Prince prepares, with great ceremony, to depart for the Czarevna's council, the chorus sings a simple song, one of the most beautiful in the whole work, which we soon realize is a lament for Old Russia, for an emissary of the Czar enters suddenly and stabs him. The music of the last act, which Moussorgsky left unfinished, is undeniably weak. In particular the final scene, showing the burning of the Old Believers on the funeral pyre which they themselves have lighted, is unworthy of its great author. But if we make allowance for these passages which Moussorgsky would assuredly have bettered had he lived, we must adjudge *Khovanstchina* one of the most beautiful works in all operatic literature.

IV

The operas of Rimsky-Korsakoff are for the most part genuinely Russian in spirit, though they show a broader range of style and subject-matter than those of Moussorgsky. Often, too, the composer's conscientious mastery of formal musical technique is plainly felt beneath the Russian musical material, so that even when the work is national in every respect we miss something of the crude power of Moussorgsky's music. In general, Rimsky-Korsakoff loved best the fanciful and the highly colored. We miss in his operas the realistic emotion, the stark humanity, of Moussorgsky. His love for oriental color and connotation led him to choose subjects which carry some suggestion of the exotic even when their materials are quite national. Rimsky-Korsakoff is a story-teller, a painter of lovely pictures, but he is not, in the deeper sense, a poet of humanity. Unless his characters have some legendary or fanciful qualities he does not seem to be quite at home with them. This is not so much a criticism of

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his powers as a delimitation of his chosen field. In his first opera he produced a work in the realistic manner of Dargomijsky and Moussorgsky, which has held its place in the Russian opera houses beside the greatest works of the school. But as his genius matured he chose to move in the direction in which it was happiest. He could unquestionably have written great operas in the realistic manner. But we cannot regret that he chose to give us the remarkable list of legendary and imaginative works which bear his name.

Rimsky-Korsakoff's operas show the qualities which are familiar to us in his orchestral works—a style which is on the whole conservative and scrupulously correct, a mastery of harmonic coloring and melodic phrasing for specific pictorial ends, a zest in the introduction of folk-tunes, a certain dryness of melodic invention, and an astonishing richness and variety in the orchestration. Beyond this, it is difficult to describe the operas as a whole. Rimsky-Korsakoff, an expert musician, modified his musical style in each case to accord with the character of the libretto he was treating.

In his first opera, *Pskovitianka* ('The Maid of Pskoff,' more commonly performed as 'Ivan the Terrible'), he adopted a style chiefly declamatory, with orchestral comment. 'The Snow Maiden,' on the other hand, is purely lyrical. *Sadko* is a combination of the two, yet executed in a style of its own. 'Mozart and Salieri' is a continuous recitative, but carried out with a simplicity and purity that is meant to recall the music of Mozart. Thus each work preserves its own mode and flavor.

'The Maid of Pskoff,' written in the early seventies and produced in 1873, shows the powerful influence over Rimsky-Korsakoff of Balakireff and the theories of Dargomijsky. Its historical, emotional and realistic

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subject-matter is of just the sort that Moussorgsky loved best to treat. The declamation is dramatic, but is melodically rather too dry to be effective. The orchestral comment is appropriate and effective. The overture and some of the orchestral numbers are in the style of 'Antar' and contain some of the composer's best symphonic work. The interpolated folk-songs, especially the song of the militia, are deeply impressive. The last act, with its fine musical analysis of the character of the Czar Ivan, as sung by Chaliapine, equals in emotional poignancy some of the best pages in Russian opera. The story tells of the overpowering of the proud city of Pskoff by the tyrant Ivan, and the modification of its fate due to Ivan's discovery that Olga, supposed daughter of Pskoff's great Prince Tokmakoff, is in reality his own natural daughter. Especially inspiring is the second act, in which the citizens of Pskoff assemble to take measures for the defense of the city. The love music between Olga and Michael is rather weak, but the scenes with the nurse are delicate and charming. The moving last act, in which Ivan discovers that Olga is his daughter and feels the upsurgings of filial tenderness, is of a character which Rimsky-Korsakoff never repeated.

Rimsky-Korsakoff's remaining operas may be listed as follows: 'A Night in May,' a romantic dramatization of one of Gogol's tales; 'The Snow Maiden' (*Snegourochka*), a colorful fairy-tale founded on a play by Ostrovsky; 'Mlada,' of which Rimsky-Korsakoff wrote one act, the others being supplied by Borodine and Cui; 'Christmas Eve Revels,' a grotesque folk-tale of peasants and witches taken from Gogol; 'Mozart and Salieri,' a musical setting of Pushkin's dialogue poem of the 'fatal messenger' who appeared before Mozart on his deathbed; the one-act *Boyarinya Vera Sheloga*, narrating the events preceding the action of 'The Maid of Pskoff,' and frequently performed as a

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prologue to that opera; *Sadko*, a folk-tale drawn from the old Novgorod cycle, and arranged on a magnificent scale; 'The Czar's Bride,' a purely lyrical opera drawn from Russian history; 'The Legend of Czar Saltan,' a more dramatic work based on a poem of Pushkin; 'Servilia,' a declamatory opera the scene of whose plot is laid in ancient Rome; 'Kastchei the Immortal,' an opera in three scenes, drawn from a Russian fairy-tale, and showing strong Wagnerian influence; *Pan Voyevode*, a lyrical opera of much beauty based on a Polish subject; 'The Invisible City,' one of most purely Russian, as well as one of the most beautiful, of Rimsky-Korsakoff's works; and finally 'The Golden Cock,' a wildly fanciful allegorical opera based on a poem of Pushkin, and finished shortly before the composer's death.

One of the most charming and popular of all these is 'The Snow Maiden,' which has firmly held the stage ever since its first performance. No other single work of Rimsky-Korsakoff's contains so many charming lyrical numbers; no other is more richly and delicately colored.

The story tells of the Snow Maiden, daughter of King Frost and the fairy Spring, who hears the songs of the shepherd Lel, and begs her parents to allow her to become a mortal. The parents consent, entrusting her to the care of two peasants. And Fairy Spring tells the daughter to call on her if she ever needs help. The Snow Maiden becomes a mortal, but Lel will have none of her. She is, however, loved by the merchant Mizgyr, who on her account deserts his affianced bride, Kupava. At the magnificent court of Berendei Kupava demands justice, but the king, seeing the Snow Maiden, decrees that she shall belong to any one of his courtiers who can woo her and win her within twenty-four hours. In the subsequent forest scene we see the revels of the people of Berendei. The Snow Maiden, seeing the lovers Lel and Kupava, finally calls upon her mother to give her human love. With this boon she at last responds to the advances of Mizgyr, but thereupon the summer sun begins to shine upon her and she melts into the rising spring waters.

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Sadko is a work dazzling with romantic color, and, as mounted at the Imperial Opera House in St. Petersburg, with the magnificence of its stage decorations. The story goes back to the legendary rivalry between Kieff, city of art and learning, and Novgorod, city of wealth and commerce.

Sadko, a poor adventurous minstrel of Novgorod, sings for the merchants of his city and is laughed to scorn by them. Maddened by their scorn, he lays a wager with them that he will catch goldfish in the Lake Ilmen. The merchants wager their goods, and the minstrel his head, on the outcome. Sadko charms the sea-king by his playing on the *guslee*, and secures the fish. Thus becoming rich, he sets sail with a fleet of merchant vessels in search of fresh adventures. A storm comes, and it is necessary to sacrifice someone to the sea-god. The lot falls on Sadko. But his good luck is always with him. Again he charms the sea-god, and the only danger is that he will fall in love with one of the beautiful sea-princesses and forget his wife in Novgorod. The king is so delighted at his playing that he dances a dance which shakes the earth and can only be stopped by the shattering of the *guslee*. Finally Sadko is permitted to return to his home and his wife, amid great rejoicing.

The posthumous work, 'The Golden Cock,' has recently been performed with great success, and seems likely to remain one of Rimsky-Korsakoff's most popular operas. The libretto, taken with considerable faithfulness from Pushkin, is nothing less than a satire on royalty, and as such was until recently forbidden performance by the censor. The poem takes us back in spirit to the early days of Russian liberalism, when the 'intellectuals' were seething with the principles of the French Revolution. In the prologue of the work, the Astrologer tells the audience that although the opera is

'A fairy-tale, not solid truth,
It holds a moral good for youth.'

BORODINE'S 'PRINCE IGOR'

—For youth! for it has always been the young who have led the radical and revolutionary movements in Russian politics.

In the first act King Dodon is considering with his boyards how the kingdom shall be defended against its invaders. After rejecting numerous proposals, the King accepts from the Astrologer the gift of a Golden Cock, whose property it is to crow and give warning whenever danger approaches. After the King has gone to sleep the Cock wakes him with a warning, and the monarch trundles on to his hobby horse and sets out to war. In the second act he has arrived on the battlefield—after the fighting is finished. From out of the principal tent of the enemy comes the Queen of Shamakha, who casts her wiles about the foolish old King, and is taken back with him to the capital. In the third act the people are welcoming the procession. The Astrologer appears and demands, in reward for the gift of the Golden Cock, the Queen of Shamakha. The angry King strikes the Astrologer on the head with his sceptre—and is terrified to learn that he has killed him. The Queen, with a scornful laugh, drives the old King from her, and the Cock utters a shrill, threatening cry as he kills the King with one peck on the skull. A clap of thunder, a moment of darkness, and the Queen and the Cock have disappeared. The unhappy people sing a chorus of regret: 'Our Prince was without a peer, was prudent, wise, and kind; his rage was terrible, he was often implacable; he treated us like dogs; but when once his rage was over he was a Golden King. O terrible disaster! Where shall we find another king!' In the epilogue, the Astrologer assures the audience (with an irony which is not difficult to catch) that they may dry their tears, since the whole story is merely a fiction.

The music is appropriately wild and barbaric. The opera was mounted with greatest splendor, and a striking novelty was introduced in St. Petersburg in placing the chorus, dressed in flaming red, on steeply pitched tiers of benches on either side of the stage.

After the two operas of Moussorgsky, the most notable Russian opera, in point of contemporary importance, is perhaps Borodine's 'Prince Igor.' The libretto was written by the composer himself, being drawn, on the suggestion of Stasoff, from a popular Slavic leg-

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end. In general style it is similar to the libretto used by Moussorgsky. It has the same disjointed quality, the same striving after large fresco effects, the same placing of the people in the foreground. But its spiritual tone is far different. There was in Borodine little of the introspective and pessimistic quality which we consider peculiarly Russian. As a brilliant and successful scientist he was accustomed to look at facts and people objectively. So the epic adventures of 'Prince Igor' are offered rather as romance than as tragedy. Borodine takes joy in the robust vigor of the people, and inclines to treat his characters like figures on a huge canvas. Moreover, his preference in music is for the lyrical and graceful, and this necessarily struck the keynote for the musical style. The work inclines to the conventional in its manner of writing. It is based on the lyrical Glinka rather than on the realistic Dargomizsky. There are the familiar Italian arias and choruses, coupled, or rather separated, by recitative.

Many of the musical numbers, like the serenade of Vladimir in the second act, seem quite Italian in their calm fluency and simple accompaniment. But for all this the work is truly Russian in feeling and treatment. Borodine said that his work was for the Russians and would have no chance of success in foreign capitals. The great chorus of the folk in the first act might have stepped out of Madame Lineva's book of polyphonic folk-song. And at times the composer chooses to be strongly realistic. The great dances of the third act have been criticized as showing too truthfully the effects of liquor on the barbarian Polovtsy. The work shows less innovation than we might expect from a man whose music generally teems with new and interesting modes of procedure. The orchestration, though brilliant, is conservative, and the harmony is for the most part content to be simple and straightforward. As a whole the opera shows an astonishingly high standard of

THE RUSSIAN COSMOPOLITANS

beauty and excellence, when we consider that it was written in snatches in the intervals of teaching and scientific research. But it was Borodine's scientific cast of mind that enabled him to work so consistently and thoroughly under these circumstances. And to the same cause we must partly lay the general tone of brightness and animal life which makes this work unique among Russian operas.

The Prince Igor of the opera is ruler of Seversk. In the first scene, which takes place in the market-place of his capital, Poultivle, we see the populace preparing to bid him godspeed on his mission of driving back the invading Polovtsy. In spite of the ill omen of an eclipse, Igor sets forth, taking with him his son Vladimir, and leaving his wife, Yaroslavna, in charge of her brother, Prince Galitsky. In the second scene we learn of the evils of his regency, and of the defeat of Igor's army and the capture of its leader. Galitsky, taking advantage of the interregnum, has endeavored to win the populace to his side with the aid of two traitors from the army, Eroshka and Skoula, the minstrels, who are the comic villains of the piece. But with the news of the defeat and the danger of an impending siege, the citizens of Poultivle are recalled to their duty and take an oath to defend the capital. The second and third acts take place in the camp of the victorious Polovtsy. The young Vladimir has fallen in love with Konchokovna, daughter of the Polovtsy leader, Khan Konchak, and is loved in return. In the third act the Polovtsy return from the sack of Poultivle, and carouse into a drunken stupor. Igor seizes the opportunity to escape on his horse, but Vladimir is held back by Khonchakovna, who later obtains her father's consent to marry him. In the opening of the last act Yaroslavna is bemoaning the fate of her land, in a long song which is one of the most beautiful things in the opera. Igor, of whose life she has almost despaired, returns to her, and the two sing an ecstatic duet of joyful reunion. In the last scene the pair enter the Kremlin of Poultivle, passing at the doorway the rascally minstrels Eroshka and Skoula, who are saved from deserved punishment by their boisterous enthusiasm and good humor.

In this disjointed work there are abundant opportunities for fine musical things. In the choruses particu-

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larly Borodine has been masterly. The characterization, however, is somewhat indistinct, even in the case of the comic villains, who are the best drawn of all. But in the presenting of rough humor, according to Dargomijsky's ideal, the composer has been brilliantly successful.

V

Thus far from Glinka onwards, we have been discussing composers who were consciously and deliberately aiming at the creation of a national Russian school of composition. But not all of the successful operas, of course, held to this ideal. As in all other departments of Russian life and art, there were two rival tendencies—the one cosmopolitan, looking abroad for models; and the other patriotic, looking at home for inspiration. A good half of the operas produced during the time we have been discussing belong in the former class. For a time, naturally enough, they were the works by which Russian opera was chiefly known in the outside world. But in recent years, with the growth of knowledge and interest in things Russian, these less distinctive works have passed out of prominence, to give way to the much more vigorous and distinguished achievements which we have been describing. By this time the sharp distinction and rivalry between the two schools has died out, or rather the two tendencies have become fused and individuals rather than schools are of chief moment. But the works of the old cosmopolitan school played an important part in the history of Russian opera, so they should be briefly described here, although not more than half a dozen of them have in any degree held their place on the European stage.

One of the older of the cosmopolitans, who holds a place of some historical importance, is Alexander Nicholaevich Seroff (1820-1871). Seroff, born in St. Peters-

burg and educated for the law, was the merest musical amateur until he approached middle age. With a somewhat uneven theoretical equipment he drifted into musical journalism and there made a deep impression on Russian musical life. At first he was an ardent admirer of Glinka, but with the rise of the strenuously national school he drew back, and presently developed an open hostility to the patriotic tendencies, being for some years the chief antagonist to the pen of Stasoff, who defended the national school with all his striking powers. During the late fifties Seroff visited Wagner and returned an ardent Wagnerian, a fact which still further hindered his appreciation of the 'neo-Russian' tendencies and achievements. Finally, when he was past forty, feeling that the cosmopolitan cause needed more than literary defense, he engaged upon his first opera, 'Judith,' a score which was generously admired by Wagner himself. The work was produced with great magnificence in 1862, and became extraordinarily popular. The music is patterned after that of 'Tannhäuser' and 'Lohengrin,' and excels in striking and grandiose effects. But the means adopted are somewhat cheap and flashy, and the workmanship is often careless or rough. A second opera, *Rogneda*, equalled 'Judith' in popularity, though it fell far short in actual musical value. In his third opera, 'The Power of Evil' (the libretto drawn from one of Ostrovsky's plays), Seroff sought to use Russian themes in the fully developed Wagnerian manner. The musical treatment, however, is dry and lacking in the vitalizing power of the poet. Seroff's operas have by this time sunk into comparative oblivion.

Another opera-writer of the cosmopolitan school was Edward Franzovich Napravnik, who, though influential in the cause of Russian music in his long service as opera director, was not himself much touched by the patriotic ideal in his composition. His four operas

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have had considerable success and popularity in Russia, and have been heard to some extent in Germany. They are 'The Citizens of Nijny-Novgorod,' produced in 1868; 'Harold,' produced in 1886; *Doubrovsky*, produced in 1895; and *Francesca da Rimini*, produced in 1902. Napravnik is manifestly influenced by Wagner, and much of his music is admirably written, both from the musician's point of view and from that of theatrical effect. Frequently the composer attempts national coloring, but it is ineffective in comparison with the great Russian works. Mrs. Newmarch finds his last opera, which has failed of success, to be the best in point of musicianship and inspiration.

The active centre of the cosmopolitan school for some years was the court pianist, Anton Rubinstein. His attitude toward Russian nationalism is well suggested in one of his early newspaper articles, quoted by Mrs. Newmarch. 'No one in his senses,' he wrote, 'would attempt to compose a Persian, a Malay, or a Japanese opera; therefore to write an English, French or Russian opera merely argues a want of sanity. Every attempt to create a national musical activity is bound to lead to one result—disaster.' There is a striking historical irony in that last sentence. It is then made the more ironical by the fact that a few years later, when the 'neo-Russians' had turned the attention of the public toward musical nationalism, Rubinstein attempted to reap success from their labors, and readily enough set himself to the composition of Russian operas using Russian musical materials. We should not be too ready, however, to accuse Rubinstein of insincerity. His theories on the subject of nationalism were not profound, but they did make allowance for a certain subconscious nationalism resulting from environment, which would inevitably modulate a composer's work to the nature of his traditions and those of his audience. But the core of Rubinstein's feeling on the

ANTON RUBINSTEIN

matter was his conviction that nationalism could not be a thorough-going, generic power in an artist. In short, nationalism meant little more to him than what we commonly know as 'local color.' This he injected freely into his stage works when occasion seemed to warrant. But he did it with little conviction, and in all that concerned the inner spirit of the work—in that subtle nationalism so well illustrated by Glinka—he proved himself a true cosmopolitan. At one time, thanks to his huge international reputation as a pianist and composer for the piano, his operas, nineteen in all, enjoyed a considerable measure of popularity. Now they are all but wiped off the musical map. For in general they are thin and uninteresting. Rubinstein's facile pen indited innumerable pages of operatic music in a conventional Italianized-German style, with much graceful melody, but with little of the dramatic and declamatory element which Dargomij-sky insisted upon. They are best in those passages which call for color and brilliancy, especially in that species of exoticism which we call 'Oriental.' Only a few numbers, like the ballet pieces and some of the concerted numbers in 'The Feramoors,' are at all memorable.

At this distance it is hardly profitable even to list Rubinstein's operas. There were eight written to Russian, and eleven to German texts. Of these latter five were on Biblical subjects, sometimes performed in the opera house and sometimes on the concert platform. The number of the German operas is due to the fact that Rubinstein's early Russian works met with little success, while the foreign stages were ready to accept works from his pen because of his widespread reputation. The best of these is 'The Feramoors,' based on Thomas Moore's poem, 'Lalla Rookh,' which contains much energy and color. The religious operas, including 'The Tower of Babel,' 'The Maccabees,' and 'Paradise Lost,'

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have fallen into complete oblivion. Of the Russian operas the best is "The Demon." This is based on Lermontoff's famous poem, which doubtless exercised a real fascination for the composer. This has held its place better than any of the others, but its comparative failure in Russia was partly the result of the opposition of the censor. "The Demon" expressed the spirit of the time in which it was written, when doubt and ennui held sway over Russian society. This 'demon,' who is the incarnation of the wasted and useless in humanity, appears as a man, seeking to redeem his lost life through love, and pursuing the Circassian girl Tamara, after effecting the murder of her fiancé. He follows her even into the convent into which she retires, conquers the good impulse which prompts him to spare her, and masters her love for a moment. But she tears herself away from him, and falls dead, whereupon an angel declares that she has won her way into heaven. And the Demon, who has yet again worked his evil upon men, remains 'without hope and without love.' In the music Rubinstein has well succeeded in contrasting the tender mysticism of eastern music with the more vigorous character of the western. The dances and songs in the Oriental manner are often charming, and the love duet of the last act has real power and energy. In spite of the success of "The Demon," many critics give the preference to Rubinstein's later opera, "The Merchant Kalashnikoff," which proved a comparative failure.

VI

Tschaikowsky was a man possessing many of Rubinstein's characteristics, but of greater intensity, sincerity and creative power. His works can hardly be called more Russian, in the deeper sense, than Rubinstein's, but they are far more interesting, and therefore have

TSCHAIKOWSKY'S OPERAS

held a place on the operatic stage. Two of them, in particular—namely, *Eugene Onyegin* and 'The Queen of Spades'—have been widely and frequently performed on foreign stages. These works, in fact, were the advance agents in foreign lands for the truly national Russian opera, just as the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth symphonies were advance agents for genuinely Russian orchestral music. With the oncoming of Rimsky-Korsakoff, Moussorgsky, and Borodine on the operatic stage, they have waned in popularity and in time will doubtless be superseded altogether, but for the present they still charm the audiences who have been disillusionized in their belief that these works represent a distinctively Russian contribution.

Over the greater part of Tschaikowsky's operatic work there hangs the Italian ideal which was inculcated into him in his early youth. But even when he sought to advance beyond this ideal, and form his operas on the principles of Dargomijsky, he hardly achieved any greater nationalism of expression. For Tschaikowsky, in addition to his love for the ideals of the south, was by temperament best in the lyric; when he sought to develop the dramatic element in his nature he was working against his natural impulses. The two or three operatic works which he modelled on the dramatic and declamatory principle have failed to hold their place on the stage. Those which remain are those which give most opportunity for lyrical expression. When Tschaikowsky is dramatic it is in the psychological rather than the theatrical sense of the term. He has achieved no splendid pictures of national life, as Moussorgsky did. As an opera writer he is best represented by the delicate psychological 'Letter Scene' from *Eugene Onyegin*.

Tschaikowsky's first operas was 'The Voyevode,' composed shortly after he left the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The libretto was supplied by the great dramatist Ostrovsky, who arranged it from one of his comedies.

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The music was written entirely in the thin and facile Italian manner, and gained but an uncertain success. A second opera 'Undine,' was lost for some years, and when found was consigned by its composer to the fire. In his third operatic work, 'The Oprichnik,' Tschaikowsky undertook to create a truly national work, on the story drawn from the legends of the days of Ivan the Terrible. Unfortunately, he did not have sufficient clearness of vision to understand that such a work must be executed in a national spirit. So insecure, in fact, were his artistic ideals, that he incorporated into the opera fully half an act from 'The Voyevode,' which was in a totally different spirit. The work attained considerable success in the first season, and has ever since held its place on the Russian stage, although its composer, as well as the Russian nationalists, found much to blame in it. Next Tschaikowsky undertook to set music to a dramatic version of Gogol's 'Christmas Eve Revels'—the same plot which Rimsky-Korsakoff used some years later. In this, he made his best effort to work according to the principles of Dargomijsky. But neither the nationalists, whose influence he was feeling strongly at the time, nor the general public, found much in the work to praise. In 1877 Tschaikowsky became strongly interested in the operatic possibilities of Pushkin's great narrative poem, *Eugene Onyegin*, especially by the character of Tatiana, and set to work at it with great intensity. It was more truly a labor of love than any other of his works, and when produced in 1879 steadily worked its way into the hearts of the Russian public, where it has remained ever since. Next Tschaikowsky composed 'The Maid of Orleans,' based on Schiller's version of the Joan of Arc tale, but was quite out of his element in the heroic atmosphere. The succeeding opera, 'Mazeppa,' though containing some of his best operatic writing, was not an unequivocal success, nor was 'The Enchantress,' written in a con-

TSCHAIKOWSKY: 'EUGENE ONYEGIN'

sistent declamatory style, encouraging to its composer's pride. So Tschaikowsky returned to a modified lyricism in 'The Queen of Spades' (his last opera except for the one-act 'Iolanthe'), and produced a fascinating work which has well maintained its fascinating popularity.

Tschaikowsky wrote of *Eugene Onyegin* in a private letter: 'I know the opera does not give great scope for musical treatment, but a wealth of poetry, and a deeply interesting tale, more than atone for all its faults.' And later: 'Let it lack scenic effect, let it be wanting in action. I am in love with Tatiana, I am under the spell of Pushkin's verse, and I am drawn to compose the music as it were by an irresistible attraction.' The character of Tatiana is one that had been almost deified by the Russian people. She is a young and fashionable lady of society, showing those qualities of simple-hearted honesty and devotion which Turgenieff has revealed to us in his women characters. Eugene Onyegin is merely a fashionable loafer oppressed with the quality which Lermontoff incarnated in his 'Demon'—boredness. He is incapable of honest action and sincere emotion. He wins Tatiana's devotion, and then, because of his introspective doubt and his inability to take a decided step in any direction, leaves her and roams elsewhere about the world. Years later he meets her at a ball, and realizes the havoc he has wrought in a human heart. 'We must judge the opera,' says Mrs. Newmarch, 'not so much as Tschaikowsky's greatest intellectual, or even emotional, effort, but as the outcome of a passionate, single-hearted impulse. Consequently the sense of joy in creation, of perfect reconciliation with his subject, is conveyed in every bar of the music. As a work of art, *Eugene Onyegin* defies criticism, as do some charming but illusive personalities. It answers to no particular standard of dramatic truth. One might liken it to the embodiment of some

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captivating, wayward, female spirit which subjugates all emotional natures, against their reason, if not against their will.' 'The Queen of Spades' has a story much more to the histrionic point. It was arranged from a prose tale of Pushkin by the composer's brother, Modeste Tschaikowsky.

Herman, a young lieutenant, a passionate gambler, falls in love with Lisa, granddaughter of an old Countess who has a reputation far and wide as a certain winner at cards. This 'Queen of Spades' becomes a sort of rival of Herman's in the affection of Lisa, for she exercises a strange influence over him through his love for gaming. She is supposed to possess an infallible secret, a combination of three cards, for winning at the gaming table. Herman, under pretext of an assignation with Lisa, conceals himself in the old Countess's bedroom at night. He intends to frighten her into betraying her secret. But she is so scared by the experience that she falls dead without having told the combination. Herman goes half mad with remorse and is haunted by the apparition of the Countess. But this apparition reveals to him the three cards. The night after her funeral he goes to the gaming house, prepared to win. He does win the first two games, but on the third game, on which he stakes everything, he turns up, not the expected ace, but the Queen of Spades. The apparition of the Countess smiles at him in revenge, and Herman puts an end to his life.

The music is full of snap and color, and is remarkably homogeneous in its fusing of the lyrical with the dramatic qualities.

César Cui, though an enthusiastic member of Balakireff's 'neo-Russian' group, must be classed with the eclectics or cosmopolitans. Being French by birth, and of an amiable and gentle temperament, he chose to work mostly in a style now drawn from Paris and now from Leipzig. He is primarily a lyricist, and is at his best in scenes of pure and not too intense emotion. He showed some desire to approximate the ideals of Dargomijsky—in point of dramatic truth if not in point of national feeling—but it is evident that he works with

CUI AND OTHER ECLECTICS

most zest when he is dealing with a graceful French subject. Cui affects few of the harmonic innovations of Moussorgsky or Borodine and is usually somewhat dry and conventional in his writing. This is partly to be explained by the fact that he wrote in his spare time, amid constant interruptions and distractions. He often shows mannerisms, drawn from Schumann, or from Chopin, or even from Auber and Meyerbeer. Nor is his creative vitality of a high order. But he is almost always charming and graceful, and his music frequently shows much strength and sincerity. The most popular of his operas is the one by which he established his reputation—'William Ratcliffe.' This gloomy work taken from Heine has the faults and virtues of its composer; it is by no means fired with dramatic truth, but the characterization of Mary is delicate, and the love music of the last act is warm and impressive. 'Angelo,' drawn from a tragedy by Victor Hugo, contains a number of admirable choruses in the Italian style, and an excellent love-duet. The sombre opera, 'The Saracen,' is drawn from the elder Dumas, and as usual is best in the lyrical numbers. A later opera, *Mam'selle Fifi*, is based on Maupassant, and a light work, written about the same time—*Le Filibustier*—received its first performance at the Opéra Comique in Paris. In his last opera Cui set, word for word, a dramatic poem of Pushkin, and followed closely the principles of Dargomizsky. This short opera, 'A Feast in Time of Plague,' was produced in Moscow in 1901. Cui's operas have, on the whole, failed to maintain their position on the stage, even in Russia, but many of their separate numbers show admirably the many virtues of this talented enthusiast.

Paul Ivanovich Blaramberg (born 1841) is another of the older generation who has been fertile in operas. His style is a composite, with much from the old French school of spectacular opera, much of the Orien-

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tal exoticism that occurs so frequently in Russian opera, and the customary use of Slavic folk-tunes. His five operas are 'The Mummers,' 'The Roussalka-Maiden,' 'Mary of Burgundy,' *Toushino*, and 'The Wave.'

From the younger eclectics there have come a number of able operas, few of which, however, have penetrated far beyond the Russian borders. One of the most ambitious attempts made by these men is the 'Orestes' of Sergius Ivanovich Taneieff (born 1856). This work is in reality a condensation, into the space of an evening, of all three plays in the Æschylus Agamemnon trilogy. The music, which is Wagnerian in its general character, is dignified and cohesive, and matches well the loftiness of the theme. But it has its pedantic side, and has not shown sufficient warmth of feeling to hold its place on the Russian stage. Sergei Rachmaninoff has maintained his high position in opera as in everything else he has attempted. His early short work, 'Aleko,' has continued to charm audiences with its vigorous gypsy rhythms and coloring. A more recent work, 'The Covetous Knight,' based on a poem by Pushkin, shows fine dramatic power in the style of melodic declamation. It has been performed, in part, in America. Anton Stepanovich Arensky (born 1861) has written three operas, all distinguished by lyric feeling and dramatic sense. The first was composed to the libretto of Tschai-kowsky's first opera, 'The Voyerode,' passed on to the younger musician by the older after he had destroyed most of his music. Arensky treated the text with dramatic force, and in particular used with great skill the folk-tunes which he introduced. His second opera, 'Raphael,' was a work in one act, distinguished by delicate texture and tender feeling. The third and the best of Arensky's operas is 'Nal and Damyanti,' which is more Wagnerian in character. The orchestral introduction, depicting the strife between the spirits of

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light and darkness, is occasionally heard in the concert hall. Michael Ippolitoff-Ivanoff (born 1859) has composed two operas, 'Ruth' and 'Assya,' distinguished by lyric charm and conscientious workmanship. A more talented man, Alexander Gretchaninoff (born 1864), has composed one opera, *Dobrynia Nikitich*, which is lyrical and picturesque, though lacking in vigorous dramatic treatment.

Among the younger Russian composers with modern tendencies Vladimir Ivanovich Rebikoff (born 1866) is one of the most distinguished. In his first opera, 'In the Storm,' he shows the abiding influence of Tschai-kowsky, but adds some of the more modern impressionistic elements drawn from the French. His second opera, 'The Little Match Girl' (produced in 1903), is a far more mature work. It is based on one of Dostoiievsky's tales, telling of the poor little girl who looked through the window into the house of the rich on Christmas Eve, and fed on the sight of a joy which was denied her. Mrs. Newmarch mentions several extremely interesting orchestral numbers from this opera—a Waltz, a March of Gnomes, a Dance of Mummerys, and a Dance of Chinese Dolls. Sergei Vassilenko (born 1872) likewise shows French influence in his opera, 'The Legend of the City of Kitezh.' And at the present time the world is awaiting the revised version of Stravinsky's early opera, 'The Nightingale.' Among the other opera writers of the day we may name G. A. Kazachenko (born 1858), with two works: 'Prince Serebriany' and 'Pan Sotnik'; A. N. Korestchenko, with three: 'Belshazzar's Feast,' 'The Angel of Death,' and 'The Ice Palace'; N. R. Kochetoff, composer of 'The Terrible Revenge,' and Lissenko, composer of a number of stage works which have gained much popularity in Little Russia.

CHAPTER XII

GERMAN OPERA SINCE WAGNER

Results of the Wagner influence; 'comic' Wagnerians: Cornelius's *The Barber of Bagdad*; 'serious' Wagnerians: Bungert, Schillings, Pfitzner, etc.; Goldmark's *'Queen of Sheba,'* etc.; the *Volksoper*: Kienzl's *Kuhreigen*, etc.—Humperdinck: *Hänsel und Gretel*, etc.; Thuille: *Lobetanz*, etc.; Klose, Hugo Wolf—Eugen d'Albert: *Tiefland*; Leo Blech, Weingartner and Schrecker—Richard Strauss: *Guntram* and *Feuersnot*; *Salome*; *Elektra*; *Rosenkavalier*; *Ariadne auf Naxos*; The Bohemian Opera; Smetana.

I

THE history of German opera since Richard Wagner has been a curious one. It seems to have little conscious direction, and has thus far (with the exception of the works of Richard Strauss and one or two isolated operas) produced nothing that could be called unequivocally successful. It seems to be the result of various cross-currents which negate each other. Though the production has been immense (being especially favored by the magnificent condition of the German opera houses), the product has on the whole been thoroughly disappointing. In point of originality, France, Italy and Russia have unquestionably surpassed Germany in the last thirty years of operatic history.

One of the most curious features of the situation is that the most powerful operatic influence the world has ever had has been the most deadening. Richard Wagner may almost be said to be the only one of the great musical geniuses whose stimulus directly produced mediocrity. But it is a fact that the only worthy products in modern German opera have been

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important owing to one or another non-Wagnerian quality. Wagner's genius was so unapproachable, his work so supreme, that the inevitable horde of imitators found themselves the merest babblers of Bayreuth phrases. Not one of the direct followers of Wagner in opera has produced a work of definite musical worth. The Wagnerian stimulus was like the great light of the gods, which kills those who look upon it. At the same time, the indirect, what we might call the 'seeping' influence of Wagner, has been fruitful beyond all computation. The principles of the leit-motif, of 'continuous melody,' or melodic declamation, have become so universal in the fashion of opera-making, that it is scarcely possible to name any operatic composer the world over who does not show the influence of Bayreuth.

The revolutionary Wagnerian work threatened, for a time, to drive every other sort of product from the German operatic stage. To fill up the gap—since Wagner obviously could not be performed *all* the time—there arose two groups of composers, who have been called, respectively, the 'pure Wagnerians' and the 'compromisers.' The former seem to have been men of mediocre talent. (This is difficult to assert, since the Wagnerian influence so overwhelms its devotees as to stifle all elements of individuality in their musical souls, but the results seem to support the statement.) The 'pure Wagnerians' subjected the master's scores to an exhaustive analysis, and then sought to reproduce the great results by a recombination of elements. The result was almost invariably without creative vitality, and sounded like the noisy and meaningless beating of brass. The compromisers were those wiser ones who knew that their talent was limited, knew that any competition with the works of Wagner would be disastrous, and sought to fill less ambitious places by discreetly adopting what was practicable of adoption in

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the Wagnerian scores and adding to it something of their own. They worthily sought to reestablish a folk-opera on Wagnerian lines, or a comic opera of less ambitious design than the *Meistersinger*. In modest measure they have succeeded.

With the single exception of Strauss and Humperdinck (in one opera) even the most successful of these post-Wagnerians have achieved only fitful and temporary distinction. Outside of these men the greatest of the Wagnerians was one who wrote a Wagnerian comic opera ten years before the completion of *Die Meistersinger*. This man was Peter Cornelius. His talent, both as a musician and as a poet, was distinguished, even approaching genius. Yet he knew his limitations better than did the post-Wagnerians, and confined himself to a comparatively modest task. His 'Barber of Bagdad,' produced at Weimar in 1858 and registering a failure that drove Liszt from the city in disgust, is still to be reckoned as the greatest modern German comic opera. It was almost forgotten for thirty years after its initial failure, and when it was revived by Felix Mottl in 1884, it was thoroughly rescored so as to 'fill' a large opera house. The process was not altogether successful, somewhat blurring the delicacy of Cornelius's music. But this music is vital and beautiful enough to assure the work a lasting place in the German repertory. The style derives as much from Berlioz as from Wagner, recalling the 'Beatrice and Benedict,' which was also supreme in its way, and just as undeservedly neglected. Even in its original scoring it seemed ridiculously complex and 'heavy' for its light plot. (The admirable text was written by the composer.) The 'continuous' character of the score, the boisterous virility of the music (mistaken by its contemporaries for 'heaviness'), and the complexity of the polyphony, seemed to mark it as a bastard product of a fanatic theory. But time has proved the justice of its com-

CORNELIUS'S 'BARBER OF BAGDAD'

poser's vision, as well as the inspiration of his music. In straightaway fun and musical charm, there are few, if any, modern comic operas that surpass it.

The plot of the opera is an adaptation of the story from the *Arabian Nights*, in which Abdul Hassan, an oriental Figaro, places a meddlesome finger into the pie of Noureddin's love affair. Noureddin is a wealthy young Bagdadian, whose love for the beautiful Margiana, daughter of the Cadi, Baba Mustapha, has reached the stage of hopeless despair. Bostana, the old nurse, consoles him, however, with the news that the young lady, who is her charge, returns his passion, and will entertain him in her apartments that evening, while the Cadi, her father, is worshipping in the mosque. Noureddin, who in his melancholia has neglected his own person, now calls for the barber, Abdul Hassan, whose garrulousness nearly drives him frantic. Abdul warns the young lover not to go forth that day, for—being a master in astrology, alchemy and philosophy—he divines misfortune. Unable to detain him with arguments he finally leaves his head shaved on one side only, to prevent his going out. With the help of Noureddin's servants this defect is finally remedied, and the barber, nonplussed but keenly interested in the love affair, follows Noureddin.

In the second act we learn from the conversation between Margiana and her father that the latter has destined her to be the bride of an elderly friend, from whom a chest full of rich stuffs has just arrived. The sound of the muezzin calls the Cadi away and Noureddin is admitted to a delicious tête-à-tête, prematurely interrupted by the Cadi's return to punish a disobedient slave. The barber, mistaking the crying slave's voice for Noureddin's, rouses a mob which invades the Cadi's house, and is accused by the irate father with intent to steal his daughter's treasure during his absence. The commotion brings the Caliph himself on the scene, before whom the Cadi and the barber denounce each other, the one as a robber, the other as the murderer of poor Noureddin, who is all the while suffocating in the treasure chest where Margiana has hidden him. The Cadi orders the box to be opened and the lover is discovered, senseless. The situation is thus cleared up, and the Caliph, sympathetic to the young lovers, induces the Cadi to consent to the union of the happy pair. They receive the father's blessing and the Caliph appoints the old barber his chief story-teller. A royal invitation to all to share in a wedding feast ends the opera.

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Next to 'The Barber of Bagdad' in modern German comic opera stands *Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung* by Hermann Götz (1840-76), the libretto of which was taken from Shakespeare's 'Taming of the Shrew' by J. V. Widmann. This too was for a long time neglected. In recent years, however, it has come to be recognized at its true worth. It has delicate and charming music, admirably setting off the characterization of the drama, moving along easily with the plot, interpreting it and never delaying it. If it fails of general popularity, it is probably because of the very delicacy which gives it distinction. This work, it should be said, was influenced little by either Wagner or Cornelius, being rather southern in technique.

Cornelius's *Der Cid* should be listed as a serious opera of the Wagnerian school (as well as the same composer's unfinished work, *Gunlöd*). It is, however, based rather on the style of *Lohengrin* than on that of the later music-dramas. But even here Cornelius worked conservatively, calling his opera 'the estimable work of a talent on a soil prepared for cultivation by a genius.'

August Bungert (born 1846), on the other hand, is typical of the minor talents who sought to rival the great Wagner. His six-day cycle, *Homerische Welt* (1898-1903), is an inflated and empty imitation of Wagnerism, intolerably long and fruitless. Yet so highly was Bungert regarded in certain circles that there was talk of a Bungert *Festspielhaus*, on the model of the Wagnerian Bayreuth. The faults of Alexander Ritter (1833-96) were of a different character. With commendable vision, he sought to adapt the Wagnerian method to the fairy play; and his two operas in this style, *Der Faule Hans* and *Wem die Krone?* failed not because they were too ambitious, but because their composer was insufficiently inspired. Yet Ritter is important in the history of German opera as the fore-

GOLDMARK'S 'QUEEN OF SHEBA'

runner of Humperdinck, and as the man whose influence turned Richard Strauss from Mendelssohnian eclecticism to radical experimentation.

Among the serious Wagnerians the names of Max Schillings (born 1868) and Hans Pfitzner (born 1869) are most eminent. Schillings' stage-works, *Ingewelde*, *Der Pfeifertag*, and *Der Moloch*, are ponderous and undramatic works, given solidity by the able craftsmanship of their composer, but not lightened with either musical charm or theatrical sense. The second attempts to be a comic opera on the grandiose scale of *Die Meistersinger*. Pfitzner is a very different matter. He is by some regarded as the most creative of living German composers. Certainly his operas are among the most creative, from the musical point of view. His fame rests upon two works, *Der Arme Heinrich* and *Die Rose vom Liebesgarten*. The former is a close imitation of Wagnerian procedure, and the second, though more original, suffers from the obscure symbolism and undramatic character of its libretto. None of these 'Wagnerians,' however much purely musical talent they may possess, have had the necessary stage sense to give their musical abilities the best operatic setting.

The ablest of the compromise composers were Edmund Kretschmer (1830-1908) and Karl Goldmark (1830-1915). The former's most successful work, *Die Folkunger*, had a distinguished career for a time, partly because of its very effective libretto (by Salomon Mosenthal). But the musical personality of the composer proved insufficient to give it a long life. Goldmark, however, has had his day as a composer of world-wide fame. His talent was for vivid color in the late romantic vein, by no means devoid of theatrical sense. The brilliancy of 'The Queen of Sheba,' with its Oriental pageantry, did not wear off for many years, and is even now called upon frequently when opera houses need to

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complete their season's repertory. Goldmark's later opera, 'The Cricket on the Hearth' (drawn from Dickens' story), was a sensational success for one season, due partly to the prevailing taste for fairy-operas, but has since dropped into comparative obscurity. Since 'The Queen of Sheba' is still frequently performed, its plot may be summarized briefly:

Assad, chief courtier to King Solomon, has been sent forth to escort the beautiful and magnificent Queen of Sheba to the court as a visitor. Returning to announce her approach he seems much perturbed and arouses the solicitude of the King and of Sulamith, his betrothed. He confesses to having met on his way a mysterious nymph, bathing in a well, and having fallen subject to her spell. The Queen arrives and when she unveils Assad recognizes in her the supposed nymph. She affects to have no knowledge of the handsome courtier, but, hearing that he is to wed Sulamith on the morrow, her jealousy is aroused and that night she lures the sleepless one forth from the palace by the sweet song of her slave Astaroth. He struggles against his passion but finally succumbs to her wiles. The next day, in the temple and directly before the wedding ceremony is to take place, the gorgeous Princess again tempts him with sweet words. He collapses completely, throws himself at her feet and openly declares his passion. He is condemned to death for desecrating the temple, but upon the pleadings of the Queen and Sulamith his sentence is changed to banishment. In the last act Assad has in despair retired to the desert, full of remorse and his old love for Sulamith returned. The siren Queen finds him again, but this time he resists her charms and after a struggle remains master of himself. Exhausted by heat and exposure, Assad is near death when Sulamith, having braved the dangers and hardships of the long journey, comes to comfort him. Just then a terrible simoon sweeps down upon them and, after the sand clears away, the lovers are discovered, dead, in each other's arms.

Two other composers who here deserve mention are Ignaz Brüll (1846-1907) and Heinrich Zöllner (born 1854). *Das Goldene Kreuz*, by Brüll, was a charming and singable light opera showing French influence, admirably scored for the voices and written with dis-

THE VOLKSOPER; KIENZL'S 'KUHREIGEN'

cernment of the true nature of the genre. Zöllner obtained his greatest success with his setting of a shortened but literal version of Hauptmann's drama, 'The Sunken Bell,' in 1899. His patriotic operas, *Der Überfall* and *Bei Sedan*, are but fitfully performed.

A certain group of composers have attempted, since Wagner's time, to establish a form of German 'popular' opera (*Volksoper*), following the example of Lortzing. The most profitable of these attempts was that of Victor Nessler, whose *Trompeter von Säckingen* for many years held a position similar to that of 'The Bohemian Girl' in English-speaking lands. In this work, it was chiefly the sentimental song, *Behüt dich Gott*, that assured its success. Another who has sought to establish German popular opera is Siegfried Wagner, none other than the son of the great Richard. His production has been unceasing, but he has never scored a real success. His first work, *Der Bärenhäuter* (1899), showed talent and had a brief successful career. The next, *Herzog Wildfang*, was a flat failure, and his later works, *Der Kobold*, *Bruder Lustig*, *Sternengebot*, *Banadietrich*, *Schwarzschanenreich*, and *Sonnenflammen*, have all been unable to hold the stage. Siegfried Wagner's style harks back to the German folk-song, while preserving, of course, much of his father's technique. But the folk-spirit is not pure enough, and the Wagnerian touch is not powerful enough, to give these operas any lasting qualities. The method is consistently lyrical, and even usually strophic. The composer is not an ambitious musician, and doubtless realizes that his talent is limited; hence, whatever may be his faults, he has at least escaped the worst faults of the 'Wagnerians.'

One better equipped for the writing of popular opera is Wilhelm Kienzl (born 1857), whose *Evangelimann* (1895) bids fair to hold the stage for some time to come. This is an operatic adaptation of a 'criminal novel,'

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set on the stage with much sense of theatric effectiveness, particularly in the 'bowling scene' of the second act. In *Don Quixote* (1898) Kienzl worked with a more serious purpose, but did not succeed in repeating his success. A recent work, *Der Kuhreigen* (1911), had an international vogue for a few years, but will doubtless soon have passed out of sight. The plot is drawn from one of the multitude of novels concerning the French Revolution which float about all modern lands.

It is a tale of a Swiss officer in Paris, arrested for singing the *Kuhreigen*, or 'cow refrain,' which had been forbidden in the army because it reminded the men of their homes and encouraged desertion. The officer, a republican, is saved from imprisonment by the Marquise Blancheffeur, who is of course a royalist. When her husband is killed by the revolutionary mob and she is cast into prison to await her turn under the guillotine, he offers to marry her to save her. But though she had previously consented to live with him in secret, since she loved him tenderly, she laughs at the thought of an aristocrat marrying a plebeian, and cheerfully faces death, in which she is determined to be a credit to her rank.

The opera contains many a pleasant sentimental tune, and the inevitable interpolation of the stirring songs of revolutionary Paris. But the dramatic quality is not especially strong; nor is it meant to be. The work is essentially a 'ballad opera' of the Balfe type. The *Kuhreigen* itself is a beautiful melody of the folk-song type.

Yet another talented composer of 'popular' operas is Julius Bittner (born 1874), an imperial judge by profession, and a musician only for amusement. His *Bergsee* (1901) contains much excellent music, especially the scene of the peasants' revolt, and *Der Musikant* (1910) has charming and able pages, but falls into the pit of 'Wagnerism.' Bittner seems to have just missed the mantle to which he aspired; for he is a thoroughly capable musician and has a charming me-

HUMPERDINCK'S 'HÄNSEL UND GRETEL'

lodic inspiration. It is the unevenness of his operas that is their worst enemy. In this field we should also mention Richard Heuberger (1850-1914), Karl von Kaskel (born 1866) and Alfred Kaiser (born 1872), all of whom have worked with talent and have gained local fame.

II

One of the best beloved operas of modern times is the *Hänsel und Gretel* of Engelbert Humperdinck (born 1854). This charming fairy-opera, which set the fashion for dozens that followed, was not intended originally as an opera at all. It is praised for its application of Wagnerian principles to a problem not attempted by Wagner. Yet, where there were scores of composers who were working day and night to draw profits from the capital bequeathed by Wagner, Humperdinck succeeded without in the least planning to. The story was written out in dramatic form by the composer's sister, Adelheid Wette, who asked her brother to supply some songs to please the children. The result so satisfied the composer that he made a complete opera of it. This he had difficulty in getting produced. But once the public had heard it they raved about it. Its simplicity and freshness were in striking contrast to the violent and morbid operas of the 'young Italian' school of realists, which had by that time satiated opera-goers. *Hänsel und Gretel* spread all over the operatic world, pleasing alike the tired dilettanti, the enthusiastic children and the discriminating musicians. Humperdinck's music is truly Wagnerian; it makes use of the *leit-motif* and of the continuous melody; it is polyphonically not a little complex; its musical quality is solid and in the deeper sense serious. In short, the musicianship lavished on the work surpasses by far that displayed by most of

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the ambitious 'Wagnerians.' Yet it is managed with an almost Gallic delicacy. Its thematic material is simple and in the pure German vein. Its construction, even when complex, is clear and sparkling. Its melodic freshness seems never to be exhausted.

The opera is a dramatization of the tale known to every German child. Hänsel and Gretel, who are left to keep house one afternoon, are discovered by their mother dancing and cutting up, are scolded and sent off in disgrace. Their father, a wood-chopper in the surrounding forest, comes home and intercedes for them. But the children are smarting under a sense of injustice and run away into the forest. In fear the mother and father follow. At the opening of the second act we see the two children, lost in the woods, hungry and lonely, seeking to console one another. The best they can do is to say their prayers and go to sleep side by side. When they wake up they are refreshed, but more than ever puzzled to know what to do. Presently their problem is solved by the discovery of a beautiful gingerbread house nearby. And, knowing the proper thing to do with gingerbread, they nibble bits off it. They are astonished to hear the house speaking to them in little squeaks of pain. It presently appears that the house is the abode of a Witch, and that it was made of gingerbread in order to lure runaway children into her toils. She says an incantation over Hänsel and Gretel and binds them with a spell, making them fast prisoners and celebrating her achievement with a furious ride on her broomstick.

In the third act we see the two children captive in the Witch's house. Gretel weeps, but Hänsel, being the boy, and therefore brave and clever, cheers her up and sets his wits to work. He discovers the incantation and secretly releases himself and then Gretel. Together they steal up behind the Witch and cast her into the oven, in which she threatens to bake children into gingerbread. Hänsel then releases, with the proper incantations, a multitude of children who have been lured by the Witch in former days and changed into gingerbread. They all join in a lively dance, and the Father and Mother arrive in time to forgive their children and join in the rejoicing.

Humperdinck's music, which rarely falls below a high level of beauty, contains many distinguished

HUMPERDINCK'S 'HÄNSEL UND GRETEL'

pages. The prelude is a work of rare delicacy and charm. The opening scene, in which the two children play, quarrel and dance together, is filled with jolly movement and simple melody. The Mother is well characterized, and the song of the Father is spirited. The first ten minutes of the second act are perhaps the most charming of the whole opera. Night gathers about the two children in the wood. They say their prayers and gradually fall asleep, lulled by the 'Sand-man's' song. Then angels—the angels of a child's dream—appear and bless the children, leaving them as day begins to break. After Hänsel and Gretel wake up there is a charming song, 'There Stands a Little Man,' which is a paraphrase of a beloved folk-melody. The scene before the Witch's house is extraordinarily dainty, and is particularly apt in showing the application of Wagner's dramatic method, in all its purity, to an extremely delicate dramatic problem. The Witch's ride on the broomstick, at the end of this act, is a memorable bit—a sort of Valkyries' ride of the nursery. From the third act we may mention the incantation music, and the final waltz.

It is not necessary to speak at length of the other operas of Humperdinck. He has not gained an unequivocal success with any of them. Two fairy operas, *Die sieben Geislein* (1897) and *Dornröschen* (1902), were disappointing; and the romantic legend opera, *Die Königskinder* (1898), proved weak in its sweet romantic character. This work was at first written as a *melodrame*—with text spoken, or rather intoned, on notes indicated in the score. The experiment did not succeed and the work was later rewritten as a full-fledged opera, and as such had some little vogue for a time. In America it achieved a somewhat disproportionate importance from the fact that it experienced its world-première in New York and that Geraldine Farrar made a distinct hit as the Goose-girl. In his only

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comic opera, *Die Heirat wider Willen*, Humperdinck used spoken text in the manner of the *singspiel*, and chose a very simple style to consort with the subject matter. But in spite of many charming pages the work as a whole has not held its place as its admirers expected. A recent musical comedy, *Die Marketenderin*, is of no importance.

The most gifted of the composers who gained fame in the wake of 'Hänsel and Gretel' was Ludwig Thuille (1861-1907). His fairy-opera, *Lobetanz* (1898), has been performed and loved in many lands. But his place on the future opera stage will doubtless be unstable because of the undramatic quality of the librettos he chose. Thuille, extremely talented and possessed of an expert technique, had a combination of racy German humor with Gallic wit, which should have placed his works even higher than they stand to-day. As it is, Thuille may be regarded as the founder of a 'school,' and that one of great importance in modern Germany. His first opera, *Theuerdank* (1897), was soon forgotten. But *Lobetanz*, in which the sugar-sweet character of the libretto was made less disagreeable by the music, was a great success, which bears a close relationship to the 'fairy music' in parts of Wagner's *Ring*. In a musical way, Thuille did even better in his next opera, *Gugeline* (1901), achieving some of the most beautiful operatic music that has been written in Germany in the last two decades. But the weakness of the libretto forbade the persistence of the work upon the stage. The plot of *Lobetanz* (by Otto Julius Bierbaum) is concerned with a poet-musician, who by means of his music restores to health a princess. The two fall in love, but the musician is condemned to death as a magician. But the princess languishes once more, and the musician alone can restore her. This time the king consents to the union of the pair.

Another opera of this school is the *Ilsebill* of Fried-

THUILLE, KLOSE, WOLF

rich Klose (born 1862). It is in one act, though it lasts nearly three hours in performance. The story is based on one of the Grimm fairy-tales, and is used as a symbol of the insatiable greed of power, which wreaks vengeance on those who presume to strive with God. The music is extremely beautiful, and really comports well with the libretto, which has its admirable qualities. The length of the work, however, makes it difficult to sustain the interest.

In a different and more ambitious vein Anton Urspruch (1850-1907) wrote his comic operas. He is best known by his *Das unmöglichste von Allem*, produced in 1898, and founded upon a play by Lope de Vega. 'In this opera,' says a commentator, 'Urspruch attempted to combine the achievements of Wagner, Verdi and Cornelius with Mozart's style, but consciously attached himself more to *Le nozze di Figaro* than to the *Meistersinger*. Urspruch constructed with great cleverness an eminently dramatic, though not poetical, libretto in which he took the requirements of music into consideration with exquisite taste. Unfortunately the music, despite its fine points, is merely the product of a shrewd art-sense, and not a musical nature bubbling over with originality.' E. N. von Reznicek (born 1861), who has distinguished himself in symphonic music, has also unsuccessfully essayed the operatic form. His *Donna Diana*, which contained Spanish coloring, was moderately successful, but his next opera, *Till Eulenspiegel* (1902), failed altogether. Reznicek is a musician of fresh inspiration and expert and delicate technique; his failure in opera must be laid to the old cause—lack of the 'theatric sense.'

Another composer who attempted an opera on a Spanish subject was Hugo Wolf, the great song-writer. His opera, *Der Corregidor* (the story drawn from Lope de Vega), contains much that is worthy of his genius, yet it is for the most part unadapted to the stage, even

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aside from the badly constructed libretto. The lyric Wolf does not here come into sufficient prominence; the Wagnerian influence led the composer astray into mazes of polyphony which weighed down the voices and left the work turgid.

III

Eugen d'Albert (born 1864) must be regarded as one of the most able of the modern German opera-writers. He is influenced somewhat by Cornelius and very slightly by Wagner, but there is also much of Italy and France in his music style, which has effected a synthesis of various modern currents and has revealed an individuality which is plainly marked. It is pleasant to add that d'Albert's outward success has been equal to his deserts. After registering failures with several essays in serious opera—*Der Rubin* (1893), *Ghismonda* (1895) and *Gernot* (1897), he essayed light opera with complete success in his one-act *Abreise*. The music is simple, joyous and appropriate, with sharp rhythms and flexible contours. In 1905 another comic opera, *Flauto Solo*, was produced with a success which lasted for some time, but *Tragaldabas* in 1907 was a failure. A recent romantic work, *Liebesketten*, contains little that is remarkable, and there are yet others of his works which call for no comment here.

But his *Tiefland*, produced in 1903, was a sensational success in more countries than one. The music is a crafty synthesis, yet by no means an imitation, of the brutal realism of the modern Italians, the impressionism of the French, and the polyphonic strength derived from the Wagner tradition—all worked in with a musical subject-matter akin to the 'popular opera.' We may freely admit that there is little originality in this work. Yet we must admire the sheer beauty of many pages, the seeming completeness of the fusion of styles,

D'ALBERT'S 'TIEFLAND'

and the individual stamp that the composer has set on it all. The libretto is based on a magnificent folk-play of the Spanish dialect-dramatist, Guimera, called in the original version, 'Marta of the Lowlands.'

It is the story of a poor maiden, Marta, whom a brutal landowner, Sebastiano, has virtually bought, as a child, from a strolling player. He has made her his mistress and slave, and despite his cruelty she has conceived a certain affection for her master. When, therefore, having planned a rich marriage for himself, to retrieve his fortune, he plans to rid himself of her by marrying her to a highland shepherd, Pedro (who readily accepts her along with a more substantial gift—a mill), she is dismayed. Pedro is, moreover, charmed by her, and his frank simplicity has likewise impressed her, while Sebastiano, who brutally tells her that he will continue to regard her as his property, for the first time fills her with disgust. Meantime Nuri, a village maiden, has babbled to the go-between, Tommaso, about the relations of Sebastiano and Marta, and, conscience-stricken, the old man tries to prevent the marriage, but is too late. On the bridal night, Marta, knowing that her tyrant is awaiting her in her chamber, begs her new husband to let her remain in the kitchen, pleading nervousness. Pedro has already pleaded his own love to good purpose, and spends the night at her feet. In the morning he goes out and learns the truth, while Marta opens her heart to Tommaso. The husband's first impulse upon returning is to kill her, but when Sebastiano appears to demand his 'right' openly, he rushes at him instead. He is made a prisoner by the lord's retainers and while he is led away Marta is bullied and almost carried off by the rich brute. Her husband, having liberated himself, returns in time to prevent this, and in the ensuing struggle kills Sebastiano. He then snatches up his bride and escapes with her to the highlands, there to live in peace.

The plot is handled with much deftness; the 'brutality' which has been complained of, is that of the peasant nature; and the crudity of the action is glorified by the poetry which pervades Guimera's whole work. D'Albert has cleverly caught all these elements in his music, even the last-named. The final scene, in which

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Marta goes with her lover to live in the highlands (symbolically as well as literally), is inspiring to the listener because it seems to have inspired the composer. The 'shepherd music' of the first scene and the pseudo-folk-tunes scattered through the work, are discreetly and effectively done. The atmosphere (again both literally and figuratively) of the mountains is admirably tinted in the score, and the realism of the penultimate act is handled with the intensity which we might expect from an Italian 'verismo' together with a certain poetic power which tells of Teutonic influence.

Leo Blech rivalled the *Abreise* of d'Albert with his comic opera *Versiegelt* (1908), and also gained no little fame from the earlier one-act piece, *Das war ich*. In both these works the plot is bright and simple; the music, which shows rather too much of the Wagnerian method for their purpose, holds them down. Nevertheless, *Versiegelt* has had much vogue in the international opera repertory. Ferruccio Busoni, the pianist, has achieved an admirable piece of work in the comic romantic vein in his opera *Die Brautwahl* (1913), the libretto of which is based on a tale of E. T. A. Hoffmann.

Far more serious in intent are Felix Weingartner, the great conductor (born 1863), and Franz Schrecker (born 1875). Weingartner's early operas, *Sakuntala* and *Malawika*, both with librettos by himself on Indian subjects, were uncertain in style, but his music-drama, *Genesius*, is deeply admired by musicians, though still caviare to the public. The trilogy 'Orestes' (1902) and the Biblical opera *Kain und Abel* (1914) reveal a musician of great technical power, but of too little popular and dramatic sense to make what is called a 'name' in the conditions of modern opera. Such a 'name,' however, was made by Franz Schrecker, who astonished Vienna and all Germany with his first opera, *Der ferne Klang*. The work is written in an

RICHARD STRAUSS

advanced and dissonant idiom, but the composer has made this style all energy and fire and color to fit the admirable libretto. A later opera, *Das Spielwerk und die Prinzessin*, proved turgid in its symbolism, and unredeemingly cacophonous in its music. Nevertheless Schrecker has proved himself to have a virtuoso technique in the most difficult modern idiom, and a sense of the theatre as energetic as it is acute.

IV

We have saved the operas of Richard Strauss until the end of this chapter, because they are overwhelmingly the most important of the modern German repertory. No other German operatic composer has produced a body of work which so persistently forces itself upon the attention of musicians and opera-goers. Strauss cannot be escaped in any discussion of modern music. 'Straussism' is far from being a dead issue, even though he has been actively before the public for more than a quarter of a century. His operas are still a subject of controversy par excellence. Their popularity is undiminished, and the controversialists of the time have shown little tendency to abate their zeal for or against the sensational figure of modern German music.

In his first opera, *Guntram*, Strauss is a conservative Wagnerian. His libretto is thoroughly Wagnerian in intent, though it outdoes Wagner in the vagueness of its symbolism. The plot, which concerns the spiritual troubles of Guntram, member of a mediæval band of Christian knights, seeking to justify the killing of the husband of the woman he loved and finally finding salvation in renunciation, is obscure, slow moving and turgid. The music shows few traces of genius, and the failure of the work cannot be lamented.

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Strauss's second opera, *Feuersnot* (1901), is in one act, with a lively libretto by Ernst von Wolzogen. The librettist calls it a *Singgedicht*—song-poem.

It is a tale of magic out of the life of old Munich. The scene is in one of the principal streets of the town, in front of the house of the Burgomaster, who has a beautiful daughter, Diemut. It is night, the festival of midsummer, when fires are lighted on all the hillsides. A crowd of children play about the streets, singing songs which Strauss has admirably imitated from the folk-song. In the house adjoining that of the Burgomaster there lives a handsome young student, a recluse named Kunrad, and there are those in town who say that he is an evil magician. The children want to enter and plague him. He comes out, and the spirit of the evening, full of physical gaiety and abandon, overcomes him. He sees Diemut, makes up his mind suddenly to quit study for the life of deeds, and seals his resolve by kissing the girl on the mouth in front of all the people. The license is not unheard of on Midsummer Night, but the children prepare to take their revenge on him for his boldness. Left alone with Diemut he tells her of his ardent passion, and she finally joins with him in a lovely duet which is the memorable thing of the opera. At Diemut's suggestion he hides in a large basket, attached to the top of the Burgomaster's house and hanging above the street. But the basket rises and leaves him in midair, while the people return to scoff at him, Diemut joining in.

He now calls magic to his aid and darkness falls over the city. Kunrad then takes occasion to lecture the townspeople for their staleness and dogmatism. The spell which he has cast on them can be lifted, he says, only through the love of woman. Diemut takes the hint, not unwillingly, and, after he has climbed down from his perch, offers herself to him. The pair go into the house, and the people wait expectantly for the spell to be lifted. Presently the lights begin to glow throughout the town, the people rejoice in their enlightenment, and the lovers are heard ecstatically singing their love-duet as the curtain falls.

The music is in Strauss's rich and sensuous manner. The Wagnerian influence has here withdrawn to its fitting place and the joyousness of the folk-spirit reigns over all. The opening scenes, which show the revels of

RICHARD STRAUSS: 'SALOME'

the children, the love-music, and the final choruses are the most beautiful parts of the opera.

Strauss's next opera, *Salome* (1905), which established his world-wide reputation as an opera composer, is based on Oscar Wilde's play of the same name, being an almost literal translation of the original, barring certain cuts.

The story is that told in the Bible, with Wilde's interpretations and additions. Salome, daughter of Herodias, wife of Herod, Tetrarch of Judea, has heard and seen the prophet John the Baptist, imprisoned in a cistern for having denounced the Tetrarch's immoral life. She has fallen morbidly in love with him. Out on the roof of the castle, while Herod and his retinue are dining within, she begs the prophet for a word of love, then for a kiss. He rebuffs her, telling her of Jesus of Nazareth, prophet of the purity towards which she should strive. The rebuff fills her with bitterness against the prophet. Herod now enters with Herodias, and bids Salome dance for him. She at first refuses, but agrees when Herod promises her anything she may ask, even unto the half of his kingdom. She then dances the Dance of the Seven Veils, while Herod, who has fallen in love with her, looks on lustfully. Then she demands her reward—the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. For she will kiss his lips in death if she cannot in life. Herod is terror-stricken, because he fears the prophet. But when Salome persists, he gives the order. Salome looks down the cistern, to catch a glimpse of the killing. Finally a great black arm reaches the head of the prophet up from the depths of the cistern, Salome seizes it and sings an ecstatic song of love to it. As she is about to take her kiss of the red lips, Herod orders the lights out. She screams that she has kissed the lips, and the Tetrarch orders his soldiers to crush her beneath their shields.

The music which Strauss wrote to this drama was unprecedented. In addition to its terrible realism, it made such extensive use of dissonance that it was generally declared to be 'not music at all.' This feeling was the more justified because of the heavy scoring of the work. But a study of the score will reveal its marvels to the student. The themes themselves are

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in many cases marvellous. The thick and unprecedentedly free polyphony formed a web of passionate undercurrents. The richness of the scoring surpassed anything that had been known in opera since Wagner. The love-music which Salome sings to the prophet is sensual and passionate to a degree even surpassing that of *Tristan*. The Dance of the Seven Veils is as wonderful in its complex counterpoint as it is barbaric in its subject matter. And the final scene of Salome apostrophizing the head of the prophet expresses an undreamed of pitch of musical eroticism. Whatever we may think of the taste or morals of a composer who could write this work, we cannot question the immense technical ability he has displayed. With him the leit-motif became fluid as it had never been before. In his wizardry at combining themes Strauss seemed to rival Wagner himself. Needless to say, the opera was a 'sensational success,' and has firmly held its place on the stage to the wonder or disgust of all hearers.

In his next stage work, *Elektra* (1909), Strauss still clings to the one-act form. This time it is Hugo von Hofmannsthal's reworking of the Sophoklean play. The German version differs from the Greek not in its outward action, but in a certain 'modern' psychological emphasis. It is, in short, the story of a woman who sees fulfilled the hatred she has cherished for years.

Klytemnestra, wife of Agamemnon, leader of the Greek forces before Troy, has by her criminal acts incurred the hatred of her daughter Elektra. Unfaithful during his absence, she has encompassed his murder upon his return and married her paramour, Ægisthes. All these years Elektra has planned revenge. The action passes in the courtyard of the palace. Elektra feels that nothing short of the murder of her mother and her step-father will avenge the family honor. She has hoped that her brother Orestes would return from his wanderings to do the deed, but has given up hope. She pleads with her mother, Klytemnestra, to confess her crime and give up her adulterous life with Ægisthes, but is met with an angry

Facsimile of Strauss' Manuscript: First Page of the Score of
'Salome'

Salome

Handwritten musical score for the opera *Salome*, Act II, Scene 2. The score is written on multiple staves, with the title "Salome" prominently displayed at the top. The music is in G major and 2/4 time, as indicated by the key signature and time signature. The score includes vocal parts for Salome, Herod, and the Chorus, as well as piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written in German. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system ending with a double bar line and the second system continuing the music. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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Salome

Herod

Chorus

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Salome

Herod

Chorus

'ELEKTRA'; 'DER ROSENKAVALIER'

refusal. She pleads with her sister, Krysosthemis, to aid her in her work of revenge, but is met only with half-hearted sympathy. She hears from a messenger that Orestes has died in a far-away country. '*Nun, denn allein!*' she cries as she digs savagely in the earth for the hatchet she has buried against this day. But a stranger appears and questions her. She feels it is Orestes. He joyfully greets his sister. She tells him of the blot on the family honor and begs his assistance in avenging it. He agrees readily. He enters the house and Klytemnestra's screams tell that the deed has been done. Ægisthes arrives and is led into the house to the death awaiting him. After this has been accomplished Elektra has attained the summit of joy, and dances furiously to exhaustion as the curtain falls.

The music is far more complex and dissonant than that of *Salome*. Here is no 'classic reserve.' The score is the utmost of passion and fury from beginning to end. The amount of downright ugliness which Strauss has permitted himself is astonishing. The score has been called by some 'not music, but dramatic noise.' But again the study of it reveals the composer's supreme mastery of advanced technique, whether or not we feel the cheapness and banality which some critics have professed to find in parts of the work. Certainly Strauss never reached a higher level of beauty (unless in certain places in his tone-poems) than in the recognition scene of the present opera. The wild dance that ends the opera is overpowering in its brutality, and the morbid spirit which presides over Hofmannsthal's work often comes to poignant expression in the music. The orchestra demanded is one of the largest in all modern opera, and the scoring is perhaps the heaviest in sheer 'tonnage.'

In *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) we are in a totally different world. The three-act libretto by von Hofmannsthal has a scene laid in eighteenth-century Vienna, and is filled with the spirit of conscious artificiality which was one of the fashions of the time. The first act opens in the bedchamber of the

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Feldmarschallin Princess von Werdenberg's Vienna residence. Young Octavian, lover of the Princess, is kneeling by her side, telling her of his love. For fear that their liaison may be discovered, Octavian, who is still youthful and girl-like, puts on the clothes of a lady's maid, and attracts the attention of the old roué, Baron Ochs von Lerchenau, who now enters. He makes an appointment with the 'girl' to sup with him in secret. Meanwhile the Princess, according to the fashion of the time, has her morning interview with her attorney, head cook, milliner, hairdresser, literary adviser, dealer in pets, etc., together with her chief musicians, who entertain her. The Baron explains that he is betrothed to the wealthy young merchant's daughter, Sophie Faninal, and asks the Princess to effect the presentation to her of a silver rose, according to the prevailing fashion. She selects her favorite, Octavian, well knowing that when he sees the young beauty his love for her will be forgotten. And she mourns her departing youth as the curtain falls. In the second act Octavian delivers the silver rose to Sophie, and the two fall desperately in love with each other. When the Baron comes in Octavian picks a quarrel with him, and wounds him in a burlesque duel. Sophie's father is angry and determined to thwart the love of the young people. But Octavian has his plan.

At the private dinner party that night the Baron dines with his 'lady's maid,' not knowing that 'she' is his rival Octavian. Octavian and his friends have plotted that by various tricks the Baron shall be scared out of his wits, and shall become involved in a disgraceful brawl. All goes off as planned, and Sophie's father, entering opportunely, is disgusted and calls off the betrothal, leaving Sophie and Octavian in each other's arms, with the blessing of the Princess.

Here, of course, we have little of the Strauss of *Salome* and *Elektra*. It is the romantic Strauss, in part, with endless richness of orchestral color and sensuous loveliness; and full of the lightness of Viennese *insouciance*, which the composer imitated cleverly. One-third of the opera is written in Viennese waltz rhythm. And here he has competed almost successfully with the other great Strauss, Johann, the 'waltz king.' Thus the work alternates between romantic music of the utmost loveliness, and dance music of delicacy and

BOHEMIAN OPERA: FRIEDRICH SMETANA

rhythmic charm. The memorable pages in the opera are many. The scene in the first act, where the Princess receives the ministrations of her various attendants, and especially the song of the hired tenor, is abounding in humor. The end of this act, in which the Princess mourns her youth, and the necessity of letting slip the boyish lover who had kept her young, is one of the most charming passages Strauss ever wrote. The scene of the presentation of the rose, at the beginning of the second act is beautiful in the manner of the *Feuersnot* love music, and the sugary waltz which closes the act deserves its world-wide reputation. In the third act Strauss again lives up to his reputation as a musical humorist, and has given us in the final scene a duet of almost Mozartian simplicity.

Of the latest Strauss opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, we need say little. In it the composer has not maintained his reputation for popular infallibility, though as a virtuoso of music he is still unsurpassed. The opera is a brief work to be sung with a very condensed version of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The unique feature of the work is the performance of two operas at once—one a piece in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* manner, and the other a classical work of supposed Greek character. The two mingle most humorously and aptly, and add to the humor and astonishment of the situation. The libretto is by Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

* * * * *

The one Bohemian who has become known beyond the borders of his own land as an opera composer may be discussed here for want of a more logical connection. Friedrich Smetana (1824-84), the composer of 'The Bartered Bride' (*Die verkaufte Braut*), is revered in his own country as a composer of intensely nationalistic impulses, admired the world over as the creator of a beautiful string quartet and universally beloved

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as the author of one of the most charming comic operas in all musical literature. 'The Bartered Bride' was produced in Prague in 1866; it was not heard outside of Bohemia until 1890, when it was produced in Vienna, since when it has been an international favorite.

Its plot is a simple story of Bohemian peasant life. Jeník, a young peasant, is in love with Marenka, the daughter of the rich farmer, Krusina. Kezal, a sort of marriage broker, holds out a prospect of further riches to the girl's father, if she will marry Vasék, the son of Mícha. But Vasék is a half-witted stammerer and Marenka is not to be inveigled into the bargain. Thereupon Kezal proposes to buy the favored tutor off for three hundred gulden. Jeník agrees, but insists that the contract shall stipulate merely that Marenka is to marry 'the son of Mícha.' After the money is paid over, Jeník promptly announces himself to be a long-lost son of Mícha and carries off the bride in triumph.

Little dramatic quality was needed in the musical interpretation of this merry little tale. Mozart was Smetana's only model, if indeed he had any. National melodies and national rhythms furnish the chief stock of the work and account for its extraordinary freshness and vitality. Naturalness, simplicity, purity of style and utter spontaneity are its predominating qualities. Fine musicianship is, of course, not lacking. Thus the overture is a masterly setting of folk-song material in fugal style. There are finely constructed ensembles: two trios, a charming quartet of dance melodies and a very beautiful sextet replete with romantic atmosphere and of a traditional charm that captivates the listener of any race. Characteristic national dances, a graceful polka and a dashing furiant, are not to be overlooked. All in all, a hearing of this work is one of the most delightful experiences possible; it is a breath of nature that will drive away the thick atmosphere of the theatre which surrounds the more sophisticated productions of modern European cosmopolites.

'ARIADNE' AUF NAXOS

Of Smetana's other operas we may mention *Dalibor* (1868); *Zwei Witwen* (1874); *Der Kuss* (1876); *Das Geheimnis* (1876); and *Libussa* (1881). Of these *Der Kuss* is the most popular in Bohemia and is distinguished by many charming details.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MODERN FRENCH OPERA

'Before the Dawn'—Saint-Saëns: *Samson et Dalilah*, etc.; Delibes: *Lakmé*; Lalo—Massenet and the old school: *Jongleur de Notre Dame*; *Manon*; *Thais*, Leroux, etc.—The Wagnerians; Ernest Reyer; Chabrier, *Gwendoline*; d'Indy, *Fervaal*; Franck's *Ghiselle*; Chausson—The Moderns: Bruneau; Charpentier's *Louise*—Dukas' *Arlane et Barbe-Bleue*; Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*; Ravel—Raoul Laparra; the modern Spanish opera.

THE history of French opera under the Third Republic is that of a slow and steady growth toward a national operatic idiom as original and distinguished as any in the world to-day. The operatic fashion from which it evolved was, as we have seen, neither original nor distinguished. Nowhere, during the time of Louis Napoleon, were operatic ideals more debased than in Paris. Operatic composers of that time clung to the methods of Meyerbeer and Auber, without having their ability. *Tannhäuser* was hissed off the stage by a fashionable clique. *Faust* was regarded with suspicion because of its innocent innovations. *Carmen* was received with indifference. The works which were the rage of the time have passed into unregretted oblivion. Berlioz, even while he was living, was forgotten. Sincere artists like Reyer and Bizet received no recognition. The direction of the Conservatoire was as conservative, but not nearly so able, as under Cherubini. Debussy's score of 'The Blessed Damozel,' sent to the directors from Italy, was rejected as unworthy of the institution. The eminent composers of the time, like Saint-Saëns, did little or nothing to influence operatic conditions for the better.

SAINT-SAËNS: 'SAMSON AND DELILAH,' ETC.

It was from two sources that improvement came. First, from the personal sincerity of men like Bizet and César Franck, whose work slowly influenced first the musicians and next the general public. Second, from the example of Wagner, who, though long held anathema in Paris, gradually gained a coterie of passionate admirers. Chabrier and Reyer, the early French Wagnerians, did a pioneer work of greatest value. (It was hardly before the dawn of the twentieth century that Wagner became recognized as a permanent classic in Parisian opera houses.) Out of these influences came a group of extremely able composers who worked out an idiom now regarded as specifically French—Debussy, master impressionist; d'Indy, most intellectual of musicians; and Dukas and Charpentier, who are among the most poetic composers of the age. But by the side of these innovators there has remained a numerous line of composers who cultivate the old operatic fashions, following in the footsteps of the immensely popular Massenet. The quantity of undistinguished operatic writing in Paris is still enormous. But the more conservative men, represented at their best by Leroux, have frequently produced poetic and original works of high ideals and able musicianship. At present France is easily equal to any European nation in the popularity and distinction of its operatic output.

I

Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns (born 1835) has been an inveterate writer of operas. Only one, however, has permanently held the stage, and it is probable that in a few years this, too, will have become little more than a curiosity. This work, 'Samson and Delilah,' is distinguished by great ability in certain passages, but shows too little self-criticism. Saint-Saëns was never very firm in his artistic ideals. In opera, particularly,

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he revealed a willingness to go with the fashions, to write to the order of the day. He was great neither in his manner nor his message. It is not too much to say that except for two very popular arias in 'Samson and Delilah' this work would not be in the international repertory to-day. Other works, notably *Étienne Marcel* and *Henry VIII*, have held the stage for a time, but have been unable to retain the public interest. The later works have almost invariably been failures. These need only be listed. They are *Proserpine* (1887), *Ascanio* (1890), *Phryné* (1893), *Les Barbares* (1901), *Parysatis* (1902), *Hélène* (1904), and *L'Anâtre* (1906).

There are some fine things in 'Samson and Delilah.' The ever popular aria, 'My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice,' has a seductive cantilena of great emotional power, and the aria occurring earlier in the second act, 'Samson, To-night the Poison,' is a lyrical-dramatic utterance unsurpassed in all French opera of the time. Delilah's 'Spring Song' in the first act is an extremely charming melody but in its facility, which approaches cheapness, it reveals the vein in which the composer worked by preference, the vein which has kept all his later works from distinction. Samson's flamboyant call to arms in the same act shows this type of opera at its worst, attaining the maximum of effect with the minimum of music. The choral work, however, is often admirable, as in the song of the old Hebrews in the first act (deftly suggesting primitive ritual music) and especially in the magnificent contrapuntal hymn to Dagon in the final act. The ballet music of the opera has considerable stage effectiveness, but lacks any elements of originality.

The opera is a fairly able dramatization of the Samson story narrated in the Bible. In the first act Samson is seen rousing the oppressed Hebrews in the Philistine city of Gizeh. Reports come of the victories of the band he is leading, and of the invincible prowess of the hero. In the public square,

DELIBES' 'LAKMÉ'

in front of the temple of Dagon, Samson sees the procession of the priests and dignitaries, and hears the seductive song of the beautiful Delilah, whom he has never ceased to love. In the second act, which takes place near Delilah's dwelling in the mountain, the high priest is plotting with the seductress to compass Samson's downfall. The secret of his strength must be learned, and a woman must do it. Samson arrives, and during a long duet succumbs to Delilah's charms. She begs his secret and leads him into her house. Then, according to pre-arrangement, the Philistine soldiers arrive. Samson, who has told his secret to Delilah and been shorn of his hair while he slept, is arrested by the soldiers and led away. In the third act, many months afterwards, Samson is seen working like a beast in a grinding mill, blind and in chains. He is taunted by the Philistines and execrated by the Hebrews whom he has betrayed. Then he is led away to the Temple of Dagon, to make sport for the Philistines. Delilah plays with him to prove her power over him. But Samson conceives his idea, and places himself between two great columns of the temple, in which the chorus sings the hymn to Dagon. His strength has returned with new growth of his hair. He forces the pillars apart and brings the temple down on the heads of the Philistines, as the curtain falls.

In addition to the operas of Saint-Saëns we should mention the incidental music to *Dejanire*, *Antigone*, Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and the two-act ballet, *Javotte*. The biblical opera, *Le Deluge*, is usually performed as an oratorio.

It is one of the fashionable light opera composers, strangely enough, who ranks among the early pioneers of modern French impressionism. Clément-Philibert-Léo Delibes (1836-1891), by cultivating the exoticism made popular by Félicien David, made some of the first steps toward building up the technique of 'atmosphere' which was brought to fruition by Debussy. Most of his work for the stage was in the form of ballets and operettas, but one ambitious romantic opera from his pen, *Lakmé*, has held its place in the opera house by virtue of its marked beauty. Except for its thin and conventional libretto the work might now be a per-

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manent number of the international repertory, instead of figuring as an occasional 'revival.' However popular and obvious Delibes is in his music, we should not be too ready to class him among the fashionable hacks. His ballet 'Coppélia' is easily one of the best works in all conventional ballet literature, and 'Sylvia' is scarcely less popular. The quantity of incidental stage music which he wrote includes some numbers of distinguished beauty, and his larger operas—*Le roi le dit* (1873), *Jean de Nivelle* (1880), and *Kassya* (posthumous, produced in 1893), contain things that are worthy of an able craftsman and an inspired lyricist.

Lakmé is properly *opéra comique*, since it contains considerable spoken dialogue, but its music is in the vein of romantic opera, and glows with color laid on in strokes sufficiently broad to be effective under the conditions of grand opera.

The story is an amiable yarn concerning a party of English people in India. In the course of sight-seeing one day they trespass upon sacred ground, and are therefore under pain of death, according to Hindu customs. They are warned by Lakmé, daughter of the old Brahmin Nilakantha. One of the party, Gerald, lingers with the beautiful Hindu maiden and promptly falls in love with her. After he has left, Nilakantha finds out about the adventure and starts on Gerald's trail. In the second act all the characters find themselves in a street fair. *Lakmé* is disguised as a street singer, and delivers herself of the 'Bell Song' which has become a permanent *pièce de résistance* for coloratura concert singers. The picturesque life of the streets in this act furnishes much opportunity for Delibes' exotic fancy. At the close of the act Gerald is struck down by a blow from one of Nilakantha's hirelings. He is left for dead, but Lakmé steals to him and rescues him. In the third act he is convalescing, far from the city, under Lakmé's care. His friend comes to tell him that he has been called to rejoin the army. He imparts the news to Lakmé, who, after he has left, takes poison.

The love music of the first act is conventional, but there are many charming melodies throughout the

LALO; MASSENET AND THE OLD SCHOOL

work, marked by delicate charm and color. Lakmé's song and the chorus of worshippers in the last act show Delibes' peculiar talent at its best.

Another composer who cultivated the exotic to a great extent in those days was Édouard-Victor-Antoine Lalo (1823-1892). He was a far more sincere and able musician than Delibes, having formed his musical style by direct study of Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann. His greatest talent lay in the color and variety of his instrumentation, but his musical ideas also showed much piquancy and individuality. His works for the stage include a grand ballet, *Namouna* (1882); a pantomime, *Néron* (1891); an early opera, *Fiesque*; a posthumous opera, *La Jacquerie*; and *Le Roi d'Ys*, produced in 1888. This work, a thing of great beauty, has remained popular in France and has not ceased to command the respect of musicians. Victor Massé (1822-1884) was a conventional opera composer of limited talents, who in his day gained great popularity in Paris. His most important work, *Paul et Virginie*, based on St.-Pierre's famous novel, still holds the French stage. His style was lyrical and often achieved delicate sentimental expression, but his technique was thin and his ideals never passed beyond those of polite entertainment.

II

The most popular operatic composer of late nineteenth-century France was Jules Massenet (1842-1913). Within a space of forty-three years he composed twenty-two operas, of which a goodly number have retained their popularity. At the time of his death he was enjoying great fame in two continents. Probably he will never again be held in such high estimation as then. In spite of its many admirable qualities his music was written in the fashion of the time and gained its suc-

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cess less through intrinsic merit than through the composer's uncanny power of following the public desires. Another fifty years will probably find Massenet's operas as passé as those of Hérold, although it is only fair to say that there are many critics who disagree with this view. Massenet's success was throughout his life a sensational one. At one time it was a common jest to say that he specialized in the 'operatic scarlet woman.' He knew the success of this type of operatic character with a fashionable audience, and deliberately played for it. At the same time, we must not suppose that he was an insincere musician. As teacher of composition at the Conservatoire he proved his profound musical knowledge, and time and again in his scores we find pages that only a composer of rare talents and sincerity could have written. But his numerous works are very uneven in quality. Success for Massenet lay in producing them in sufficient quantity to keep his name ever before the public. And so, even in the best of his scores we catch the note of facile dexterity. The composer lacked that burning devotion to an ideal which makes works live through the ages. But if we admit that his ideals fell short of the highest, we must admire the musical ability which he poured with prodigal though uncritical abundance into his operas.

Massenet's musical style was that of Gounod and Ambroise Thomas, fertilized by the genius of Wagner. In his youth the composer of *Thaïs* was a devoted admirer of Wagner, and he early adopted, with modifications, Wagner's principles of the *leit-motif* and the 'continuous melody.' There is also, at rare intervals, a Wagnerian fullness and intensity in his writing. But generally his music was extremely thin. This also was in a way a virtue, for the notes, while few, were chosen with expert understanding of their effect, and the principle of economy of means was carried out consistently.

'JONGLEUR DE NOTRE DAME'; 'MANON'

But it was by no innovation that Massenet achieved his success (though he introduced minor innovations in plenty). His success was chiefly due to his facility in writing a certain sort of rich, sensuous melody of a sort which we occasionally find in Gounod's 'Faust.' Round about this he brought into play his deep musical knowledge and art, writing, for instance, effectively pseudo-ecclesiastical music in *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, dances recalling Rameau in *Manon*, and Oriental exoticism in *Hérodiade*. His facility in various styles was great, and nearly always rose above the level of imitation. But it never rose to the level of absolute genius.

Massenet's operas (excluding early or unimportant ones) may be listed as follows: *Le Roi de Lahore* (1877); *Hérodiade* (1881); *Manon* (1884); *Le Cid* (1885); *Esclarmonde* (1889); *Le Mage* (1891); *Werther* (1892); *Thaïs*; *Portrait de Manon* (1894); *Navarraise* (1894); *Sapho* (1897); *Griselidis* (1901); *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* (1902); *Cigale* (1904); *Chérubim* (1905); *Ariane* (1906); *Thérèse* (1907); *Bacchus* (1909); and *Don Quixote* (1910). Of these, the more important are *Hérodiade*, *Manon*, *Le Cid*, *Esclarmonde*, *Werther*, *Thaïs*, *La Navarraise*, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, and *Don Quixote*. Massenet's early religious cantata, 'Mary Magdalen,' has also been given in dramatic form, and remains among his more important works.

Perhaps the finest of all Massenet's operas, from the musician's point of view, is *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*.

Its charming story is taken from Anatole France's *L'Étut de Nacre*, which in its turn is founded on a legendary tale. It tells of the poor juggler of the Middle Ages who entered a monastery, being lured by the good things to eat there. All the monks had some art by which to praise the Blessed Virgin. One was a poet, another a painter, another a musician. Only Jean, the juggler, had no worthy art to offer to Our Lady. But the cook told him that one could praise her by doing one's own work well; that a well-cooked meal was worth a thousand

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poems. And this gave Jean an idea. He would offer his art, however humble it was, to the Virgin, as the thing he could do well. And he sat down before the statue and began to perform his juggling tricks. The monks, entering, were scandalized, and wished to stone him for sacrilege. But suddenly a miracle occurred. The statue of the Virgin became illuminated with a mystic light, and smiled her blessing at the poor juggler. And Jean, having attained to blessedness in his own way, dropped dead.

There is some charming music in the first act, where mediæval festivities are in progress in front of the monastery. Jean's wine song in this act is noteworthy. In the second act the part of the cook is filled with humor, and much musical skill is shown in the characterization of the various monks. It is in the last act, however, that Massenet rises to his highest. In the scene of the blessing he attains a high and inspired religious expression.

Nearly on a level with *Le Jongleur*, viewed from the standpoint of the musician, is *Manon*. The story, founded on Abbé Prevost's famous romance, has been set for the stage many times, notably by Puccini. Massenet's music is highly graceful, and shows a refinement which his other operas too often lack.

In the first act *Manon*, accompanied by her guardian, is on her way to the convent where she is to be educated. From her carriage in the street she flirts with one of the cavaliers, Des Grieux, and presently runs away with him. In the second act she is living with him in Paris. He wishes to marry her, but she permits him to be kidnapped by his parents, who wish to prevent the *mésalliance* and offer her money to assist them. Next she passes to de Bretigny, and makes conquests by her beauty in fashionable society. But learning that Des Grieux is at a seminary and is about to take orders, she goes back to him, and persuades him to forsake his vow and return with her. In the next act she takes part in some questionable operations in a gambling house, and so gives the opportunity to a rejected suitor to have her arrested and deported as a *fille de joie*. In the last act, on the road to Havre, she meets Des Grieux for the last time and dies in his arms.

'THAÏS' AND OTHER MASSENET OPERAS

The dance music in this opera is exceedingly graceful and beautiful. In general the delicate passages are works of refined artistry. The emotional music of the scene in the seminary is extremely violent and at times moving. At no point in the opera is the music of the highest rank, but it takes a high place because of the glitter and flash that continually hovers about it.

Thaïs is perhaps the most popular of all Massenet's operas—certainly in America. But musically it is far inferior to such a neglected work as *Ariane*.

The libretto is an unforgivable emasculation of Anatole France's masterly novel. The story purports to show the kinship of religious ecstasy with sensual love. Anathaël, a monk in early Christian times, goes to the palace of Thaïs, a brilliant and notorious courtesan of Alexandria. He seeks to convert her to a Christian and holy life. She tries her wiles on him, but withers before his religious zeal. Suddenly she becomes converted and orders her servants to burn her palace. She will enter a convent to expiate her sins. But Anathaël, in the meantime, has succumbed to her sensual charms and is madly in love with her. In the last act, after years of wandering and struggling with temptation, he comes to her at the convent and tells her of his love. But Thaïs by this time is a cold religious mystic and will have none of him. She dies, while he is driven, accursed, out of the convent.

Massenet's music for this text has considerable outward brilliancy, but on the whole is thin, noisy and vulgar. The 'Meditation,' which pretends to depict the feelings of Thaïs as she is considering her sins, is probably the most famous single number in all Massenet's operas. It is a perfect example of the long, sensuous melody on which so large a part of his fame rests.

In *La Navarraise* Massenet sought to compete with the Italian fashion, set by Mascagni, of the brief opera containing the utmost possible emotional vehemence. His libretto is a lurid one of the sacrifice of a girl for her lover during one of the Spanish civil wars. The music is remarkably successful considering that it is

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essentially imitative, but has neither the originality nor the beauty of its prototype, *Cavalleria Rusticana*. *Hérodiade*, which first spread Massenet's fame, is an unobjectionable version of the Salome story, treated conventionally but with many effective musical numbers. *Le Cid* is based on Corneille's famous tragedy, and contains some inspiring music in a heroic vein which Massenet unfortunately did not cultivate later in life.

Not far behind *Manon* in musical excellence comes *Werther*, founded on Goethe's novel. Here Massenet has maintained to a notable degree unity of style and a high average of excellence. The music of the death scene may rank with some of Massenet's best emotional music. *Ariane*, which is composed in the spirit of the mock-classical French operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contains some delightful ballet music, and altogether shows Massenet to excellent advantage in taking a vacation from his operatic scarlet woman. (We may remark, however, that the opera was a failure.) Finally, mention should be made of *Don Quixote*, a free dramatic arrangement of Cervantes' immortal yarns, which, besides offering a superb part to a singing actor, achieves some memorable moments of musical humor.

The ablest of those operatic composers who have written closely in Massenet's style is perhaps his pupil, Xavier Leroux (born 1863). His operas may be listed as follows: *Evangeline* (1895); *Astarte* (1900); *La Reine Fiamette* (1903); *William Ratcliffe* (1906); *Théodora* (1906); and *Le Chemineau* (1907). The last-named is unquestionably the best. Its libretto is based on Richepin's beautiful play of the same name, telling of the tramp who was a tramp because God made him so, and of his heart-aches when he returned to a pleasant countryside and met the girl who he knew was his daughter. The music is thin like Massenet's, but it

LEROUX, PIERNÉ, MESSENGER

is carried out with much delicacy of feeling. The vocal parts usually consist of a modified melody that approaches recitative, and the orchestral comment is subtly beautiful. The music smells of the soil, in spite of its refinement, and the introduction of an old French Noël in the last act shows how truly musical and dramatic is Leroux's instinct.

Gabriel Pierné (born 1863) is another pupil of Massenet who has distinguished himself in modern French music. But in opera he has not been signally successful. His important works are *Vendée* (1897); *La Fille de Tabarin* (1901); and *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* (1910). The first shows much dramatic intensity, but has not succeeded in holding the stage. The last named is a delicate setting of a famous French comedy, preserving much of the wit and sparkle of the original. In this work Pierné shows his most marked gifts.

A composer of operas extremely well known in Paris is André Messager (born 1853). He has given himself almost wholly to works of a light character, and has here made a place for himself that is almost unique, by reason of the verve and delicate artistry of his simple music. But Messager is also a musician of wide learning and rare natural endowments, and as a conductor has been associated with some of the most important operatic events in modern Paris. His light operas have been performed in England and even in America, but have never gained much popularity outside of France. The more important ones are: *La Fauvette du Temple* (1884); *La Bearnaise* (1884); *Isoline* (1888); *La Basoche* (1890); *Scaramouche* (1892); *Miss Dollar* (1893); *Mirette* (1894); *Fortunio, Véronique* (1898); and *Madame Chrysanthème* (1893). Of these, *La Basoche* and *Véronique* are masterpieces in the light genre. *La Fauvette du Temple* is an enduring favorite of a light romantic cast. *Madame Chrysanthème* has the doubtful honor of having preceded Puccini's 'Madame

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Butterfly' by some ten years, for Pierre Loti's story, on which it is based, had a plot almost identical with that which John Luther Long later used for his story. Messenger's opera was planned in the grand style, but had not the dramatic vitality to hold the stage. In general, all Messenger's faults and virtues are suggested in a phrase by a contemporary critic, who says that he is one of the '*compositeurs galants*.'

III

Out of the ruts of convention, French opera was first lifted by the Wagnerian influence. The establishment of the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth was a dating point for this influence throughout Europe. But the spread of it in France was hindered not alone by the great difference in racial temperament, but still more by the intense prejudice against everything German which was the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war. Those who first embodied the Wagnerian influence in native opera were a few specially vital spirits who worked for the most part outside the regular lines of Parisian musical life. In all cases they received only slight recognition during the closing years of the nineteenth century. All had to struggle against open opposition on the part of official Paris.

The Opéra, which annually mounts new French works that are utterly without distinction, refused to receive such works as Chabrier's *Gwendoline*, and César Franck's *Hulda*, and maintained toward Reyer's *Sigurd* a superior attitude which is among the long list of that institution's sins. All the great pioneer operas of this period—Reyer's *Sigurd*, Chabrier's *Gwendoline*, d'Indy's *Fervaal*, and Chausson's *King Arthur*—were first produced not in Paris but at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels.

FRENCH WAGNERIANS: REYER

These works played a large part in the liberation of the French creative spirit from the trammels of convention. And had the creative spirit in France been less vital they would doubtless have 'Wagnerized' all later French opera. But fortunately, when the native creativeness was finally liberated, it took a distinct and original form. This liberation was substantially complete by 1900 and the great French operas thereafter—all of them first performed in Paris—showed a mature musical style quite free from Wagnerian influence. The pioneers did their work well. They gave to France the artistic ideals of Wagner without his dogmas or his peculiar technique. Nor should it be thought that Reyer, Chabrier and d'Indy were mere imitators. Each of them brought something highly personal and creative to his work. If they had not done so they could never have exerted a lasting influence. No composer ever more completely defied successful imitation than Wagner. If the French pioneers had been mere Wagnerian press-agents, their works would now be dead and embalmed. But being geniuses or creative talents of a high order they have taken a brilliant and permanent place in French musical history, and have joined that most distinguished group of Frenchmen—those who have been the trouble-makers and revolutionists of their age.

The first of the great pioneers was Ernest Reyer (1823-1909). Though early in his career he showed radical tendencies, his genius did not come to fruition until it was fertilized by the Wagnerian influence, fostered by a trip to Germany and a meeting with the master himself. His early works for the stage were *Maître Wolftram* (in one act, produced 1854); *Sacuntala*, a ballet produced at the Opéra in 1858; and *La Statue*, produced at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1861. This last work, in the opinion of Bizet, was the most remarkable opera that had been performed in Paris in twenty

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years. It had a certain popularity, but shocked Parisian sensibilities because of its advanced harmony. Reyer's next opera, *Erostrate*, was first given in Baden-Baden, but was little performed thereafter. A few years later Reyer came strongly under the influence of Wagner, whose *Tannhäuser* he had already admired with reservations. It is probable that even before the Franco-Prussian war he was at work on *Sigurd*. But after the great conflict he knew there was little hope for the performance of a work drawn from Germanic materials and executed professedly under German ideals. *Sigurd* waited until 1884 for production, and then went to the Monnaie in Brussels. The following year the Opéra in Paris accepted it. But the management insisted on making cuts of which the composer disapproved, and he vowed never to set foot inside the building again until the work was restored to its entirety. This vow he was obliged to keep as long as he lived. His last opera, *Salâmmbo*, was given in Brussels in 1890, and like *Sigurd* enjoyed great popularity for a time.

The charge of 'Wagnerism' is easily levelled against *Sigurd*. In France, Reyer was freely charged with direct plagiarism. But this charge will not stand. *Sigurd* was completed before Wagner had finished the 'Ring,' and although Reyer naturally knew that Wagner was working with the subject, there is no evidence that he was acquainted with the German work while he was composing his. He used an earlier version of the Nibelungen legend for his basis, and arranged his libretto freely according to his own desires. The music, however, is admittedly Wagnerian in character. But it recalls the Wagner of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* rather than the Wagner of the 'Ring.' Moreover, the music is more persistently lyrical than Wagner's, and the melody is of a distinct and personal type. Altogether, the similarities between the two works are

FRENCH WAGNERIANS: CHABRIER

rather superficial than inherent. In parallel passages—as for instance in the Magic Fire music or the Val-kyrie music—Reyer's inferiority is so obvious that any comparison is out of the question. He failed to conceive his subject in the grandiose terms of Wagner. But the dramatic passages are of a high order, and the melody is noble and moving. Reyer's orchestration, inspired by Wagner and Berlioz, shows the brilliance and clearness which has distinguished latter-day French music.

A still more notable figure in French opera was Alexis Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894). More buoyant and more personal than Reyer, he laid the foundations, with Fauré, for the modern French idiom, in opera as in orchestral and piano music. In his early years he took his profession rather lightly, being in fact regarded as a talented amateur until he was well along in middle life. His earlier operas, *Vaucochard* and *Fishton-Kan*, are negligible, and his later successes, *L'Étoile* and *Une Éducation Manquée*, were only *jeux d'esprit*, giving no evidence of serious intentions and large powers. But in 1880 Chabrier made a trip to Germany. Once more the miracle happened. Chabrier returned a Wagnerian. The fruit of his new dreaming was *Gwendoline*, a serious opera planned on the largest scale and executed with extreme care and immense resourcefulness. But it had the German stamp and was of course regarded as 'barbarian.' It first saw the stage in Brussels. Then it travelled from one German opera house to another, everywhere received with enthusiasm. By 1893 it reached Lyons, and late in the same year was given its first performance at the Opéra in Paris. The composer sat in a box. But he was unable to enjoy the sweetness of triumph. He had already been stricken with the cerebral paralysis which caused his death, and did not know that the enthusiastic applause of the audience was a tribute to him. At

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his death Chabrier left one completed act of another opera, 'Briseïs,' which was performed in concert, and gave evidence that the completed work would have been even finer than *Gwendoline*. In 1887 Chabrier produced at the Opéra Comique a light work, *Le Roi malgré lui*, which had considerable popularity in England and America.

Gwendoline is a highly stimulating work. It has its faults; much of it is over-complex and labored; often the composer's inspiration flagged, and his melody proved flat. But the score reveals such energy and resource that it commands respect and study even at this time, when musical technique has taken wonderful strides. Chabrier was treating a serious subject in a manner utterly opposed to that which was popular in French opera houses. He refused to compromise in any respect. The music is less lyrical, less captivating, than Reyer's. Little weight is given to pure melody. But the dramatic passages are very powerful, and the score is a treasury of the energetic modulations which have been carried so far by Dukas and Charpentier.

The libretto, written by the composer, is far from good, though it has a certain operatic power. It concerns the Princess Gwendoline, daughter of the Saxon King Armel, whose land has been invaded by the Danes with Harald at their head. Harald falls in love with Gwendoline, who gains her father's consent to the marriage. But the crafty king has a plot of his own. He gives Gwendoline a dagger with which she is to kill Harald on the wedding night, and plans to murder his followers after the feast. Gwendoline, however, sincerely loves her husband and gives him the dagger that he may defend himself. In the bridal chamber they hear the cries of the dying Danes. Harald rushes out and is killed by Armel, whereupon Gwendoline stabs herself. The final lurid scene shows the burning of the Danish ships.

In the music we should mention especially the prelude, which is often performed in concert, and the de-

D'INDY: 'FERVAAL'

lightful spinning song in the first act, founded upon an old Irish tune.

One of the most remarkable operas of modern France is the *Fervaal* of Vincent d'Indy (born 1851). The work is strongly Wagnerian both in its music and in its libretto, which was written by the composer. Moreover, it is powerfully tinged by the religious feeling of the composer, who is a devout Roman Catholic. Its plot is chiefly symbolical and its final scene has a mystical power equal to that of *Parsifal*. Its music has dramatic vigor that seems almost harsh. It rages and bumps, but gathers an intensity that holds the listener spellbound. D'Indy has none of Wagner's power of sustained lyricism, but with his pregnant themes and daring harmony, and above all with his heroic, direct instrumentation he lifts us to the Wagnerian level. His *leit-motifs*, though few, are managed with great skill. He has little command over the moods of tender sentiment; and his themes usually seem cold. But it is astonishing how, out of his materials, he can create music that is so human and moving.

The action of the opera is kept on the epic plane. *Fervaal*, a hero of the Celtic people in the south of France, has led his army against the Saracen invaders, and has been conquered and led captive. With the Druid priest Arfagard, he is held by the enemy until he has recovered from his wounds. By this time he finds himself desperately in love with Guilhen, daughter of the Saracen leader. Arfagard watches the trend of events with anxiety and reminds *Fervaal* that it is his sacred duty to revive the Druidical religion among his people and through them to establish its political supremacy. Thus recalled to duty *Fervaal* renounces Guilhen and escapes to the sacred city of Cravann. Guilhen, who is something of an Amazon, especially when spurned, arouses her warriors and leads them against Cravann. In the second act, in Cravann, *Fervaal* is marshalling his warriors for the defense of the city. He knows that he is unworthy of his position, for he has wished to betray his sacred cause for the arms of a woman. But the danger brooks no delay. The Saracens are approaching. With

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Guilhen at their head they overwhelm Cravann. The fighting is desperate. Fervaal had wished to expiate his sin by dying in the thick of the fight, but at the end of the fray he alone of all the warriors is alive. The Saracens, too, are annihilated. Fervaal bemoans his ruined city and his vanished dream and begs Arfagard to kill him. But just as the dagger is being raised he hears the voice of Guilhen calling him. At the call of love he once more forsakes his religion. He goes to her. She is dying. And as she breathes her last breath he realizes that he was right to obey the call of love instead of the call of the decaying Druid faith. For the call of love is the call of Christianity, the new religion that is being born among men. And he carries the body of Guilhen up the mountains, towards the great light, as his spirit ascends to a new understanding of love and life.

In the music there are many passages of great beauty. The scene of Druidical consecration which opens the second act, the war song which closes it, the lament of Fervaal over the ruined Cravann, and the superb final scene in which the hero ascends the mountain with Guilhen in his arms, are pages which have added unique glories to modern French opera. No less excellent is the final scene of d'Indy's second opera, *L'Étranger*, produced in 1901 at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels. This work, too, has a mystical meaning and a religious spirit, but its setting, a village on the seacoast of France, is modern and realistic.

Another composer who revealed in his music his devout adherence to Roman Catholicism was d'Indy's master, César Franck. This remarkable man, who served for years as organist at St. Clothilde, in Paris, and worked in everything for the glory of God, nevertheless had legitimate ambitions for the fame of the Opéra. But neither of his operatic works has as yet been heard, in its entirety, in the city where he lived, and neither was performed at all during the composer's lifetime. *Hulda*, composed between the years 1879 and 1885, received performance, strangely enough, at worldly Monte Carlo in 1894, and *Ghiselle*, composed

CÉSAR FRANCK; ERNEST CHAUSSON

in Franck's last years, in 1896, at the same place. *Hulda* was received with much reverence and appreciation, but has not held its place on the operatic stage. The music, in Franck's calm and well ordered, but sensuous style, is extremely beautiful, but lacks sufficient dramatic quality or musical characterization. *Ghizelle*, which was not quite complete at the time of Franck's death and was finished and orchestrated by his pupils, cannot be regarded wholly as his work. It shows many weaknesses, which would no doubt have been corrected in time by the composer, who worked slowly and with keen self-criticism. But it has certain pages worthy of the master hand that wrote them.

One of Franck's most talented pupils, Ernest Chausson (1855-1899), made a place for himself in operatic history, if not on operatic stages, with his *Le Roi Arthur*. His earlier dramatic works are a two-act lyrical drama, *Hélène*; a three-act lyrical drama for soprano and female chorus, 'The Legend of Saint Cecelia'; and incidental music for Shakespeare's 'The Tempest.' 'King Arthur,' the libretto of which was written by the composer, was performed in November, 1903, at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. Its plot is a fairly strict dramatization of Mallory's tales of the Round Table centering about the quarrel between Sir Launcelot and the King. In the first act the knights are shown about the Round Table, with Merlin, the crafty magician, plotting dissension. In the second scene Sir Launcelot makes love to Queen Guinevere, and is discovered by Merlin, who uses the scandal to further his schemes. The second act shows Merlin's formal accusation of Launcelot. The latter struggles between his two desires—to save the reputation of the Queen and to save his honor as a knight. He ends by making the confession and offering defiance to the King. The last act takes place on the battlefield, where the forces of King Arthur and Sir Launcelot have been fighting. Sir Launcelot expi-

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ates his sin by plunging into the thick of the battle and meeting his death. King Arthur, left alone by the seashore, almost the only remaining member of his army, is carried away by a magic barge which takes him to the enchanted isle, as 'the old order changeth, giving place to new.' The music is cast in heroic mould, and glows with orchestral color. Were operatic fashions in these days different, were the sensual pictures of the Massenet operas less dominant in the public mind, this work would doubtless be a permanent one in the international repertory. As it is, *Le Roi Arthur* remains a dating point in the history of modern French opera and an earnest of what its talented composer might have accomplished had not an untimely accident cut him off.

IV

Another of the innovators in French opera is Alfred Bruneau (born 1857). He is really a link between the old school which was influenced by Wagner and the later school which culminated in Debussy. Though a composer of much ability and originality he has passed out of contemporary influence. But historically he must take a very high rank. He is regarded in Paris as one of the originators of impressionism in opera; when his first works were produced he created almost as great a furore by his novelty of manner as Debussy did ten years later. Some critics assert that he taught Debussy no small part of his trade. His name is closely associated with that of Zola, the realistic novelist who so shocked and stimulated France during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fact that Bruneau dared to make himself a musical apostle of Zola, at a time when the author was still regarded with suspicion and hatred, proves his courage. He saw the beauty and poetry beneath Zola's fierce naturalism,

ALFRED BRUNEAU

and translated it into music. In his operatic method Bruneau was much influenced by Wagner. Concerning this method he has written: 'I wished my orchestral part to have the force of a symphony. I wished to bring into its proper place—that is, the foreground—the human soul, of which I am only the servant. I have tried to translate as simply, as directly, as faithfully as possible, the sentiments of the characters, and I wished that the public should not miss a single one of the words that were sung.'

After an early work, *Kérin*, produced in 1887, Bruneau made a reputation with *Le Rêve*, performed at the Opéra Comique in 1891. This is an admirable dramatization of one of the most beautiful of Zola's novels. The public was astonished at the originality of Bruneau's music, and certain singers declared that the parts were unsingable, because 'you could never tell where they started in.' Free and faithful recitative and impressionistic harmonies were then a complete novelty in French opera. (Bruneau's predecessors in this had, it will be remembered, in every case made their success outside of Paris.) Even to-day *La Rêve* has not lost its charm. Few French operas are more lovely and appealing in their interpretation of human sentiment.

Another opera, *L'Attaque du moulin*, also founded on a novel of Zola's, was produced at the Comique in 1893, and had some performances in New York in 1910, though without success. Of the remaining operas, a number have librettos written for Bruneau by Zola himself. *Messidor*, the first of these operas, was produced in 1897 at the Opéra and would under normal conditions have had a brilliant career. But just at this time Zola was extremely unpopular because of his participation in the Dreyfus affair. *L'Ouragan*, produced at the Comique in 1901, is regarded by musicians as Bruneau's best opera. Further there should be men-

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tioned *L'Enfant roi*, a five-act 'comédie lyrique,' produced at the Comique in 1905; *Naïs Micoulin*, produced at Monte Carlo in 1907; *Les quatre journées*, and a one-act piece, *Lazare*—all written by Zola or arranged from his works. By this time Bruneau's idiom is somewhat outmoded, though far in advance of that cultivated by many of the fashionable opera composers of Paris to-day. But his actual influence during the nineties cannot be overlooked. He was the great French protagonist of operatic realism, and was one of the first to insist on the excellence of librettos in prose. Altogether, he has a glory out of proportion with his practical success.

The most popular of all the modern French operas is Charpentier's *Louise*. Its popularity is quite deserved. Never was a work written more *con amore*. The composer lived in Paris the Bohemian life which he glorifies in his opera, and believed with all his heart the things he preached in it. This complete abandon and merging of the artist in his work is instantly felt by the listener. No other modern opera can so lift us out of ourselves into a delirious ecstasy. From many points of view *Louise* measures up to the highest standards. It is adored by the working people of Paris, for it paints their life with loving truthfulness. It is adored by the artists of Paris, for it sings their joys with inspired ecstasy. It is admired by the dramatists as the best of modern opera librettos. It is respected by the social philosopher, for it traces cause and effect with all the care of the scientific historian (whether or not we believe that the things it praises are good or evil). And finally, it is admired by musicians, not alone for the superb fire and abandon of its music, but also for the supreme technical skill with which Charpentier has interwoven his themes.

The story is a realistic tale out of the life of the Paris of to-day. Put on the stage almost as it stands, the libretto would

CHARPENTIER'S 'LOUISE'

be an excellent drama of the modern school, faithful in characterization, rich in local detail, firmly knit in plot, and masterful in its handling of suspense and climax. But out of the realistic story rises a dithyrambic poetry and passion. Louise is the only daughter of a working-class family, industrious, intelligent, and rigidly conventional. She is loved by an artist whose life and standards are those of Bohemia. In the first act, in Louise's home, her mother discovers her love affair and roundly scolds her for it. The artist, Julien, has made formal proposal to her parents for her hand and has been rejected. Louise has promised, in that case, to go away and live with him. Her father persuades her to remain at home. It is her mother's unsympathetic and scolding attitude that leaves her rebellious. As the act closes she reads from the newspaper to her father, and comes upon the words: 'Paris is extremely beautiful at this time of year.'

In the second act the curtain rises on a street in the Montmartre section of Paris, in front of the factory where Louise works. It is not yet dawn, and the merchants who haunt the early morning streets are setting up their stands. A mysterious figure, the *Noctambule*, enters, clad in a dress suit. He is a symbolical bit out of Charpentier's fancy—the spirit of pleasure who stalks about Paris at night, laying snares for the young. The dawn appears and the wandering merchants enter crying their wares in the traditional street cries of Paris—each a beautiful snatch of melody. Julien and his Bohemian friends now enter. They are waiting for Louise, who must come this way on her way to work. Presently she comes, escorted by her scolding mother. She sees Julien and rebelliously throws him a kiss. A moment after the mother has gone she comes out of the factory and joins Julien for a moment. He urges her to run away with him, but she half-heartedly refuses. The curtain falls on the scene as the spectator hears the distant cries of the old clothes man and the vegetable vendor. The second scene shows the interior of the clothes factory where Louise works at a sewing machine. The life of the working girls is shown as they tell stories to one another between snatches of work. Julien and the Bohemians serenade the girls from the street. Louise is much affected. Suddenly she puts on her hat, saying she is sick and must go home. She leaves, and one of the girls excitedly reports that Louise and Julien have gone off together.

The third act shows the garden of a little house on the butte of Montmartre, overlooking Paris. Here Julien and Louise

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have been living for some weeks, more in love with each other than ever. During their long love scene, as the night comes on, the distant city becomes grandly illuminated. Louise and Julien go into their cottage, and a large company of rollicking Bohemians, men and girls, enter the garden, preparing it with Japanese lanterns for festivities. They are preparing one of the traditional fêtes of Bohemian Paris, the Crowning of the Muse. When all is ready the lovers are called, and with great rejoicing Louise is crowned Muse of the Sacred Hill. But a lugubrious note breaks in upon the festivities. Louise's mother comes to tell of the father's illness, and to beg her to return to his bedside. Willingly, but sadly, she goes back with her mother, out of her life of happiness.

In the fourth act, in Louise's home, we see the father, now nearly well, and the rest of the small family. Things have settled down once more to their old status, the father affectionate, Louise discontented, and the mother fretful and scolding. It is the mother's scorn that makes the girl once more rebellious. She has a right to her happiness, and she will take it. Her father pleads with her, but she hears, or seems to hear, the voices of gaiety from Montmartre. Defiantly she announces that she will go back to her lover. The father, in rages, seizes a chair and drives her from the house. A moment afterwards he realizes what he has done and rushes down the stair after his daughter. But she has gone. She will never come back. And the father, raising his clenched fist toward the city whose lights are shining through the window, cries: 'Oh, Paris!'

In writing the music Charpentier, pupil of Massenet, began with the thin and undistinguished style which had so long been fashionable in French opera. The first act, which was written in the early years of Charpentier's career, when he was living in Italy on the *Prix de Rome*, might have been penned by Massenet in his less inspired moods. Yet it has distinction because of the faithfulness and sincerity of the characterization—a result of Charpentier's passionate love for the life of the working classes. In fact the first act carries because of its drama rather than because of its music; the most notable passage, that of the father's pleading, is too sugary to be worthy of an able com-

CHARPENTIER'S 'LOUISE'

poser. But in the remaining acts (which were written some years later) all this is changed. Massenet's technique is still to be observed as the basis, but the whole spirit is new. There is none of the parlor romanticism of the composer of *Thaïs*. The harmony has become daring and modern, and the counterpoint astonishing in its effective interweaving of themes. But it is the themes themselves that reveal the chief change. A number of them are taken down literally from the Paris street-cries. Those which are original are throbbing with a life that never seems to tire. Charpentier has rejected almost entirely the set melody, with a beginning, a middle and an end. He uses an endless melody which rises and falls, sometimes built up with short, passionate gasps, and sometimes drawn out in tenuous curling languor. But always the music is symphonically fused. And always it is the heart and the emotions which speak.

The prelude to the second act shows in tone 'the awakening city.' Over the slow bass theme mingle the various street cries, with great spirit and effectiveness. The combination of naturalism and lyric poetry which resides in the first scene has made it justly famous. In the second scene the girls' working room is depicted with spirited accuracy. But it is the last two acts which lift *Louise* into the class of the great operas of the time. After an inspired prelude, entitled 'Towards the Distant City,' the act begins with Louise's famous song, '*Depuis le jour.*' With the calm vehemence of happy emotion the aria reveals the sensuousness of sentiment as few other composers have been able to reveal it. The long duet or dialogue which follows, with its ecstatic praise of love and its pæan to the 'Eternal City,' is lyric in the highest degree. There are not half a dozen love scenes in all opera to compare with this. The scene of the festivities later in the act is developed with infinite spirit and humor. In the last act one of

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the gems is the lullaby which Louise's father sings to her. But later come the pages which are perhaps the finest in the whole opera. Louise, chafing under what she feels to be unjust restraint, hears outside the voices of festive Paris, and rises to a pitch of ecstasy which becomes almost insanity. Here the waltz theme, taken from the third act, has an effect which is indescribable. The scene builds up with a firm power which is one of Charpentier's marks of genius. No other modern composer can sustain for so long a time a high emotional excitement in the auditor.

Great things were expected from Charpentier's second opera, *Julien*, produced at the Opéra Comique in the spring of 1913. But the work proved an unqualified disappointment. It was a mystical and symbolical exposition of the soul of a poet, as Charpentier sees him, an attempt to carry him through his various subjective experiences, first in success, then in communion with humanity, then in the depths of despair, and finally in the lowest and cheapest realms of life. In the first scene he is shown with Louise, who, presumably, after the close of the action of *Louise*, has been his constant inspiration. And throughout the action Julien, in his spiritual adventures, meets a woman under many forms—now a peasant girl and now a daughter of the streets—who is no other than a transformation of his inspiration, Louise. The work is a dramatic version, in expanded form, of an early cantata, written before the completion of 'Louise,' entitled 'The Poet's Life.' This work was full of the highest promise, and that part of the music of *Julien* which it supplies is excellent, though not dramatic. But the remainder of the music shows little inspiration and only a trace of the composer's old ability. The vocal parts, however, considered purely as declamation, are admirable. The symbolism is obscure and the mysticism seems affected. Whether this means that Charpentier's powers have

DUKAS' 'ARIANE ET BARBE-BLEUE'

completely failed, or merely that the composer lacks self-criticism, is not yet to be determined. He promises two more operas, *L'Amour du Faubourg*, and another not yet named, which are to serve as sequels to the 'Louise' story. They are to treat realistically the life of the working classes. From these we have a right to expect much. And in the meantime Charpentier's admirers will regard *Julien* as a mere misstep on the part of the composer.

V

Paul Dukas (born 1865), one of the masters of modern orchestration, has written, in addition to the one-act 'poème dansé,' *Le Péri*, one opera, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, which has made him famous.

This delightful drama of fancy purports to tell how the terrible Blue Beard was foiled by one of his wives and what happened to the others who through her gained their freedom. In the first act, in Blue Beard's castle, we hear the angry crowd of peasants outside threatening the tyrant with death. Ariane, the bride of Blue Beard and the sixth of his wives, is led in by the old nurse who apprehends that she will go the way of her predecessors—disobedience and incarceration in a dark dungeon. Blue Beard has given Ariane seven keys, which open seven doors in the great hall of the castle. Six of these keys she may use, but the seventh is forbidden. Ariane has her own theory of wedded bliss: The first duty of the wife is to disobey. She announces to the nurse that she is not interested in the six doors, being concerned only with the one forbidden. But to please the nurse she opens the six permitted doors, one after another. From the first when it is opened, there pours forth a stream of amethysts; from the second, sapphires; from the third, pearls; from the fourth, emeralds; from the fifth, rubies; and from the sixth, diamonds.

Then Ariane opens the seventh door. All is dark. Then from out the silence there comes a slow and mysterious song sung by women. They are the five wives of Blue Beard. The song grows louder and louder. Blue Beard enters in anger, and

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is about to punish his wife, when the crowd rescues her. In the second act she has descended into the dungeon. She becomes friends with her terrified sisters, and urges them to escape. Mounting upon a rock, she opens one of the barred doors, and the moonlight streams in. Peering through the window the wives behold the sea.

In the third act the women are again in the great hall of the castle. They rejoice in their deliverance and plan to escape. But news comes that Blue Beard, who has fled from the peasants, is returning. As he approaches the castle he is seized by the angry countryfolk, and led into the great hall, bound and wounded. Ariane dismisses her deliverers, and performs some decent services to her husband in making him comfortable. Then she announces that she will depart to freedom. But the other wives have been moved to pity by the sight of the tyrant's plight. Their motherly instinct is aroused, and they gather around Blue Beard, tending to his wounds. Quietly, but firmly, they refuse to go with Ariane. True to the traditional myth about women, they lick the hand that beats them. And Ariane departs to freedom alone.

In this opera, which was produced at the Opéra Comique in 1907, Dukas has used to the full every opportunity for vivid coloring afforded by Maeterlinck's text. There is only one true melody in the whole work—the magical song sung by the five wives. The rest is vivid musical impressionism and magnificent orchestral color. The vocal parts are an ably managed and expressive recitative. The composer's harmonies are thick and his palette heavy. His musical style has the daring of Debussy's without that composer's clearness. But Dukas cannot be reproached with bad taste. His heavy musical style, as though the whole score were overlaid with gold and jewels, admirably suits the text. As an example of pure musical virtuosity we should notice the scene of the doors, where one motive does for all six, but for each case is so transformed as to suggest the peculiar quality of the jewels which appear.

Pelléas et Mélisande, the one opera of Claude De-

DEBUSSY'S 'PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

bussy (born 1862), is in every way a masterpiece. No other stage work since Wagner's *Tristan* has been at once so utterly novel and so firmly and consistently executed. There are many to whom Debussy's music is unsympathetic, but it is impossible for the critic to deny the highest praise to this man who, against the dogmatic and universal opposition of his time, held to his vision and created the style which expressed him, fashioning it a thing complete out of vague examples which were floating about in the musical air. Debussy spent ten years in the composition of 'Pelléas and Mélisande,' content to wait for the work to compose itself, as great works do. A poet of the most sensitive nature, he sought to make each separate bar the perfect expression of the mood and meaning of the poem. As a result he gave to the world a type of musical expression which can fairly be called unique. We have never before so felt the subtle things of personality expressed in music.

Debussy has written: 'I have been reproached because in my score the melodic phrase is always in the orchestra, never in the voice. I tried, with all my strength and with all my sincerity, to identify myself with the poetical essence of the drama. Before all things I respected the characters, the lives of my personages.—When listening to a work, the spectator is wont to experience two kinds of emotion, each one quite distinct—the musical emotion, on the one hand; the emotion of the character on the other; generally they are felt successively. I have tried to blend these two emotions and make them simultaneous.'

The recitative in the voice, which the composer here refers to by implication, is a recitative extremely sensitive to the French text. It is simple, and loves to dwell on a single note. But it has rejected entirely the conventional recitative of opera, which Wagner not always escaped from. (It is astonishing how long it

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has taken composers to escape from the tradition of formal recitative established by the Italians in the seventeenth century.) Debussy's recitative cannot be called melodic, and neither has it any important harmonic office in the symphony of the orchestra. It seems to float upon the music of the play, interpreting the characters' intentions while the orchestra interprets their souls. The musical style of this orchestral interpretation is that which has been made familiar in Debussy's works to music-lovers the world over. It is in effect the negation of the old harmonic system, though it can generally be explained on the old basis. But alterations and chords of the ninth are here not departures from the musical norm. They are the essence of the music.

And this music is a marvellous tissue of vaguely sensuous tones. It is modern impressionism at its most delicate, its most refined. Compared to it, Debussy's familiar piano pieces, descriptive of fountains, of scenery or what not, are vulgar. Nearly all the music is pianissimo, as are the souls of Maeterlinck's characters. It has nothing to do with emotion in the ordinary sense. It transmits only the perfume of personality. Within its self-imposed limits it is wonderfully varied. But the limits are so narrow, the spiritual field is so precise and unfamiliar, that to many auditors the opera seems monotonous.

Maeterlinck's play might be called a subjective version of the 'Paolo and Francesca' legend. It is concerned not at all with the outward doings of the characters. Such doings have for Maeterlinck only a symbolical value. Nor has the actual emotional tissue of the characters any interest for the author. He has set his words to express values too subtle for words. The play, written with great simplicity and great psychological penetration, has become one of the established masterpieces of modern drama. Rarely in all

DEBUSSY'S 'PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

history have supreme creations of music and drama been so perfectly fused.

The action is outside of place and time. In the first scene Golaud, lost in a forest, discovers the beautiful Mélisande standing by a well. He questions her. She will not tell whence she came, or why she is there. She has lost a crown in the well. Golaud begs her to come with him, and timidly she obeys. In the second scene, in Golaud's castle, his mother is reading a letter from him, telling how he has married Mélisande and lived with her for six months, 'and yet she is a stranger.' He is about to bring her home to the castle. In the third scene Golaud's younger brother, Pelléas, is taking Mélisande about the castle grounds. He tells her that he must go away on the morrow. 'Why must you go?' she asks. A sympathy has sprung up between them which is soon to become love. The second act opens in the park before the castle. Mélisande, playing by the fountain, loses her wedding ring, which falls into the deep water. Pelléas, who is standing by, counsels her to tell the truth about it to Golaud. But the truth she is afraid to tell.

In the second act, Golaud, who has been slightly hurt while hunting, discovers that the ring is missing, and commands her to find it. Where did she lose it? Out on the beach. The apprehension of sin has already begun its work in the woman's soul. In the third scene Pelléas and Mélisande are in a dark grotto approaching the sea. They are there in order to be able to describe to Golaud the place in which the ring was lost. But they come upon three paupers who have sought shelter there for the night, and in vague terror they return to the castle.

The third act leads us directly up to the catastrophe. In the first scene Mélisande is leaning out of a window in a tower of the castle. Pelléas, passing outside, begs that he may kiss her hand good night. She endeavors to reach her hand to him, and her long hair falls about him. He passionately kisses the hair. Golaud, passing by, sees this, but his only comment is: 'You are children.' In the next scene, however, he takes Pelléas into one of the vaults of the castle, where the air is putrid with death. 'Do you see that chasm?' he asks. And then the two leave. In the third scene, at the entrance to the vaults, Golaud tells his brother that he saw everything on the previous night, and warns him to go away. In the fourth scene, outside the castle, Golaud is playing with little Yniold, his son by his

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first marriage. He questions him about the conduct of Pelléas and Mélisande. Then he holds the boy up that he may peer through the window behind which the guilty couple are sitting. The child mingles with his innocent chatter words which confirm the suspicions of the husband.

The fourth act opens in a room in the castle. Golaud, meeting Mélisande, suddenly bursts out in fury, threatening her and dragging her about the room by her long hair. The second scene of the act is purely symbolical. Little Yniold, standing out in a meadow, sees a flock of sheep and sees how foolishly they go their separate ways, without rhyme or reason. In the third scene, Pelléas and Mélisande are again in the park by the fountain. He must go away on the next day. He will talk with her for the last time. They kiss. Suddenly they hear the steps of the approaching Golaud. Golaud comes and kills Pelléas with a blow.

In the last act we see Mélisande lying in her bedchamber, where she has a few days before given birth to her child. Golaud begs her forgiveness. She grants it. But it is evident she is too near death to be fully conscious of what has happened. Golaud seeks to obtain a full confession from her, but her answers are too vague to convey anything. Mélisande dies, and old Arkel says mysteriously: 'It is now the turn of the child.'

It is difficult to single out special passages for mention. In no part of the work does Debussy's inspiration sink to a lower level than his best. But the interludes which connect the many scenes within the acts are especially to be mentioned, not so much because they are finer as because they are more homogeneous than the rest of the music. Mélisande's charming unaccompanied song which opens the third act shows what beauty Debussy can compass within very narrow limits. Personal feelings about the opera will, as we have said, be as many and as varied as its spectators. But judging the work critically we must admit that it is one of the most brilliant musical achievements of modern times. Much also is expected of Debussy's two long-promised operas, drawn from tales by Edgar Allan Poe—'The Fall of the House of Usher,' and 'The Devil in the Belfry.'

RAVEL; LAPARRA

One of the most inspired of the composers who have followed in Debussy's footsteps is Maurice Ravel (born 1875). His one-act light opera, *L'Heure espagnole*, produced at the Opéra Comique in 1911, reveals his superb power of musical picturing and his brilliant command of orchestral timbres. His charming piano suite, 'Mother Goose,' he has arranged for a pantomime. But his greatest achievement for the stage hitherto is the pantomime 'Daphnis and Chloë,' performed by the Russian Ballet in Paris in the spring of 1913. Its inexhaustible energy and Dionysian frenzy are prophecies of fine things if Ravel should in the future turn definitely toward the stage. Gabriel Fauré, Ravel's teacher and pioneer in French impressionism, has written one opera—*Pénélope*—produced at the Champs Elysées in Paris in 1913. The text, by René Fauchois, is a fairly faithful dramatization of the story of the return of Odysseus as told in the *Odyssey*. The music is conscientiously executed and has many beautiful passages, but is on the whole too tenuous for its subject.

VI

Raoul Laparra (born 1876), though Spanish in blood, was born in Bordeaux and educated in Paris, where his operatic works have first received performance. He may therefore be included in this place. Following (though perhaps unconsciously) Nietzsche's dictum that the opera should be based upon the dance, he made of his earliest dramatic work, *La Habañera*, a glorification of one of the most beautiful of Spanish dances. The music is simply written, and suggests that the composer is technically unequipped. But in the present case the technique is adequate to the peculiar subject-matter, and the work must be adjudged one of the most successful of recent operas in the smaller genre.

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It is in three acts, and tells a story of legendary character. Two brothers, Pedro and Ramon, living in a Castilian village, love Pilar. Pedro is the successful suitor. In the first act, during a festival of the people, Ramon gets into a quarrel with his brother over the girl and kills him while the Habañera is being sung and danced in the streets outside. The dying man prophesies that if Ramon does not confess, the Habañera will return each year, lacking a day, after the murder, to haunt him. In the second act Ramon and Pilar are married and living in their cottage. It is just a year after the murder and Ramon is apprehensive. There are knocks at the door, and three blind musicians enter, playing a ghostly tune. Ramon recognizes it as the Habañera. Then he sees behind the blind men the ghost of Pedro, who warns him that if he does not confess he will return the next night and take Pilar with him. In the third act Pilar and Ramon are in the cemetery at midnight, just a year after the murder, paying their respects to the dead Pedro over his grave. The priests in the nearby chapel sing a death-hymn. Ramon is terrified to discover that this hymn is only the Habañera in a new form. He sees Pilar becoming weak and faint over the grave. He struggles to confess his crime, but the words will not come out. Pilar sinks down dead on the grave, and Ramon in agony shrieks to the heavens the confession of his sin.

In the music the composer has made no attempt to soften the barbarity of the subject. The Habañera music that runs through the work is a magnificent thing, both in its melody and in the poignant harmony supporting it. The prelude, which is based upon the Habañera, is a memorable piece of writing; it is scored in the most 'open' manner possible, being in great part nothing but two wild and clashing voices. The music of the blind musicians in the second act is most effective, and the development of the death-song into the Habañera in the third act is a bit of writing as theatrically effective as anything that has been heard in opera houses in many years. A later opera of Laparra's, *La Jota*, follows the formula of *La Habañera*, being built around a folk-dance, but the music is lacking in inspiration and technical ability.

THE MODERN SPANISH OPERA

Among the multitude of French opera composers who have had performances in Paris, few show any marked ability. Isidoro de Lara (born 1856), an English Jew whose real name is Isidor Cohen, has written a number of ambitious but mediocre works, among them *Messaline*, *Le Reveil de Bouddha*, and *Amy Robsart*. Henri Février gained a certain amount of reputation with his setting of Maeterlinck's *Monna Vanna*, but showed in it no mark of originality or talent.

In modern Spain there has been a vigorous renaissance of opera, though few of the works produced have gained much vogue beyond the Pyrennees. The most eminent is Isaac Albeniz (1860-1909), whose *Pepita Jimenez* is filled with Spanish rhythms and colors. Other operas of his, mostly of a light character, are 'The Magic Opal,' 'Enrico Clifford,' and 'King Arthur.' Felipe Pedrell (born 1841) cultivated a heroic style of opera much influenced by Wagner. His early works, *El ultimo Abencerrojo* (1874), and *Quasimodo* (1875), showed much ability, and *La Celestina* (1904) and *La Matinada* (1905) have proved popular. But his great work is his trilogy, 'The Pyrennees,' a work intended to symbolize the glories and sorrows of the composer's native land. The whole series was performed in Barcelona in 1902, and the music, while uneven, showed some pages of the highest inspiration.

Enrique Granados (born 1867), a composer who cultivates modern French impressionism, has tried his hand at opera with varying success in the following works: *Maria del Carmen* (1898); *Folletto*; *Miel de la Alcarria* (1893) and *Goyescas*, first produced at the Metropolitan Opera of New York (1916).

The plot of this opera, by Fernando Periquet, was suggested by works of the great Spanish painter Goya. 'It takes for its characters the types of Goya's brush; for its theme the sentiment of Goya's time (1800)—perhaps of all time—that in a woman's hands man is ever a *pelele*' (a stuffed figure usually

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held to represent some undesirable or tiresome lover, which in the opening scene is being tossed about by a group of *majas*, the Spanish equivalent for a sort of demi-mondaine). It is a tragedy of love and jealousy. Fernando and Rosario, the high-born lovers, on the one hand, the toreador Paquiro and his *maja* sweetheart Pepa, on the other, are the chief characters. In Act I Paquiro arouses Fernando's jealousy by inviting Rosario to a low ball (which, he reminds her, she has attended before). Fernando forces her to accept the invitation and in Act II accompanies her thither. The conflicting play of passions ends in the arrangement for a duel between the two men. In Act III Fernando and Rosario engage in a love scene, interrupted by the summons to the duel. Fernando falls and dies in the arms of his love.

The music is spontaneously melodious and full of rhythmic vitality. The orchestration is brilliantly colorful and modern in treatment. Throughout Granados obtains magnificent and original effects with the chorus, which at times is used as a rhythmic accompaniment to the Spanish dances (notably the Fandango of Act II), and at other times carries on a running commentary on the action. The soliloquy of Rosario and her love duet with Fernando in Act III are melodically most beautiful. The orchestral intermezzo is likewise notable.

Among others, Joaquin Turina has written a one-act opera of great promise, *Fea e con Gracia* (1905); Amadeu Vives has made his bid for recognition as a nationalist composer with *Colomba* (1910) and *Marusca* (1914); Tomas Breton (born 1850) has written *Los Amantes de Ternel*; José Costa Nogueras has shown indifferent talent in his many operas, among which may be listed *Flor de Almendro* (1901), *Ines de Castro* (1905) and *Valieri* (1906); and finally K. Usandizaga, a talented pupil of Vincent d'Indy, has shown great sincerity and promise in his *Las Colondrinas*, produced in Madrid in 1914. We need not here mention the many and prosperous composers of zarzuelas, or comic operas, which have been beloved in Spain for many decades.

CHAPTER XIV

ITALIAN OPERA SINCE VERDI

The Verdi influence; Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele*; Ponchielli: *Gioconda*, etc.; Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, the beginning of 'verismo'; Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*; Umberto Giordana: *André Chénier*, *Fedora*, etc.—Giacomo Puccini: early works; *Manon Lescaut*; *La Bohème*; *Tosca*; *Madama Butterfly*; 'The Girl of the Golden West'—Wolf-Ferrari: *Le donne curiose*; *Il segreto di Suzanna*; *Le gioie della Madonna*—Zandonai: *Conchita*, etc.; Montemezzi's *L'amore del tre re*.

I

MODERN Italian opera derives, broadly, from one source—Verdi. The influence of the creator of *Aïda*, *Otello* and *Falstaff* has been as potent in Italy as has that of Wagner in Germany. And on the whole it has been more fertile. This is due partly to the extraordinary operatic facility of Italian composers, and their almost exclusive occupation with the stage, and partly to the fact that, in general, Verdi's manner is less sophisticated, more tangible, than that of Wagner. It proves nothing against Wagner as a dramatist, but a great deal for the overreaching power of his genius, which scaled heights that none have been able to follow. Verdi was, for all his genius, closer to the earth, to his compatriots; his language could be more easily adapted to their gauge. And yet there is hardly one Italian who has come as near him as Strauss, for instance, has come to Wagner—unless it is to be the young Zandonai. Certainly none have surpassed him. The influence of Wagner is, of course, not a negligible one either in modern Italy, and, finally, we must record,

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as one unmistakable source of the much-boasted Italian *verismo*, Bizet with his color-blazing *Carmen*.

Among the immediate followers of Verdi there is, first of all, Arrigo Boïto. He bridges the gap between Verdi and the present. His *Mefistofele* was written in 1868—before Verdi's *Aida*, and of course before *Otello* and *Falstaff*, for which he wrote the texts. It is the only one of his operas known to the public, though he has written at least two others since (*Nerone* and *Orestiaide*). Though the work was for a time looked up to with something like awe, it seems already to have outlived its glory, which, by the way, dates from 1875, when the work was revived in Bologna (in revised form), its original production in Milan having been a failure.

Boïto has taken for his libretto scenes from both parts of Goethe's *Faust*, more or less at random and with little dramatic continuity. It is a succession of episodes 'each calculated to throw fresh light upon the character of Faust but by no means connected' (Streatfeild). First there is the Prologue in Heaven, in which the soul of Faust is disputed between the Deity and the Power of Darkness; then there is the Kermesse scene and the Mephistopheles scene in Faust's chamber, where Faust bargains his soul for the Devil's services. Then the garden with Faust and Margaret as lovers. The Brocken scene of Goethe's Part I is followed by the prison scene and Margaret's death; after which we have the classical Sabbath (with symbolic visions of Faust and Helena, the Germanic spirit and the Greek), Faust's death and redemption.

'Although *Mefistofele* is unsatisfactory as a whole,' said Mr. Streatfeild in his book on the opera, 'the extraordinary beauty of several single scenes ought to secure for it such immortality as the stage has to offer. Boïto is most happily inspired by Margaret, and the two scenes in which she appears are masterpieces of beauty and pathos. In the garden scenes he has caught

PONCHIELLI AND MASCAGNI

the ineffable simplicity of her character with astonishing success. The contrast between her girlish innocence and the voluptuous sentiment of Gounod's heroine cannot fail to strike the most careless listener. The climax of this scene, the delightfully tender and playful quartet, which culminates in a burst of hysterical laughter, is a stroke of genius. In the prison scene he rises to still greater heights. The poignant pathos of the poor maniac's broken utterances, the languorous beauty of the duet, and the frenzied terror and agony of the *Finale* are beyond praise.' This is a criticism of 1897. Here is one of 1914: 'It struck a medium of Gounod and Berlioz, approved by the reflective understanding of a poetico-musically talented man who did not struggle with the arts as Wagner did, but who sensitively shunned them. He vacillates back and forth between Northern and Italian feeling. Sometimes he has orchestral ideas full of charm, as in the solo accompaniment of Margaret's insanity; then again he writes choruses in the most approved scholastic style, such as the chorus in hell and the redemption chorus; suddenly a naturalistic thought—the boys in heaven—then again a merry Italian phrase, in Faust's monologue or in the love scene; everything deliberately chosen and tested and set down, not without mental torture. The conscious eclectic. A Wagner enthusiast but not a Wagner.' *

And there you are. What came of it all? Ponchielli is certainly a disciple, though Verdi is the spring at which they all drank. Ponchielli was the teacher of Puccini and Mascagni, at present the two liveliest of them all—in Milan. Then there is an offshoot of the Neapolitan school, with Spinelli, Giordano, and Leoncavallo. Of Ponchielli † himself, though he wrote some eight other operas, we outside of Italy know only one—

* Oskar Ble: *Die Oper*.

† Amilcare Ponchielli, b. Sept. 1, 1834, d. June 17, 1886.

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La Gioconda (1876). It still serves as a first-class 'conversational opera' appropriate for the season's opening at fashionable opera houses. Its libretto is founded upon Victor Hugo's '*Angelo, Tyran de Padoue*.' Its heroine, the 'Gioconda,' is a Venetian street singer, who in order to secure her lover Enzo's safety, bestows her hand upon the spy, Barnaba. Enzo, however, promptly pursues an intrigue with another woman. Despite this the generous Gioconda saves both Enzo and his new mistress from the hands of the latter's outraged husband, and in order not to fall a prey to Barnaba, she takes her own life. Melodiousness is the chief quality of *Gioconda*, but it is melody of a rather cheap order. There are effective concerted numbers in the opera and the influence of *Aida* and *Mefistofele* is evident. The ballet music has been much praised. *Gioconda* is not a classic and not sufficiently new to be counted as modern.

The first of the *new* works was Puccini's *Le Villi*, produced in 1884, and already characteristic. Two years later came the *Flora mirabilis* of Spiro Samara (b. 1861). Alfredo Catalani, the composer of *La Wally* (1890), was also considered a factor. But the real impetus came with the Sozegno prize competition for one-act operas, begun in 1890. Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* won the prize. It ran a triumphal course through Europe and is still popular. It started a school, a school of compressed emotionalism, commonplace brutality converted into dramatic force. The 'verismo' of *Carmen*, a dash of French operetta banality, the typical melodramatic sensations—love, jealousy, murder—and Italian melody; the sharply cut, incisive turns of young Italy, easy to remember and hard to forget—these are the ingredients. There is strength and charm in this concoction, brutal strength and insidious charm, with a blood-red spontaneity that has given it a mighty impetus. It has already run its course—the later works

LEONCAVALLO'S 'I PAGLIACCI'

of its school show a refinement, a touch of spirituality, that is foreign to the early models, but the homophonic ecstasies, the melodic intoxication, the chant-like tone reiterations (by way of recitative), the unisons, the diatonic shifting of harmonies, the simple, often coarse orchestration, have persisted down to some of the most recent examples.

Cavalleria Rusticana is based on a Sicilian story by Verga, and preserves much of the explosive dramatic power of the original. Lola, the beloved of Turridu, the dandy of the village, has, during the latter's absence in the wars, shifted her affection to Alfio, a drayman, and married him. Turridu, on his return, promptly transfers his attentions to Santuzza, who returns his love. But the coquettish Lola sets out to recapture Turridu's heart and succeeds. All the pleadings of her rival are in vain, who, brutally repulsed by Turridu, carries the tale of Lola's conduct to her husband. Alfio promptly challenges Turridu to a duel and kills him as the curtain falls.

The music of *Cavalleria* is vivid, colorful, full-blooded and melodious all the way through. The *Siciliana* of Turridu is probably the best solo piece, though the stirring truckster's song, the *romanza* of Santuzza and Lola's folkish 'ditty' are equally popular. Lastly we must not forget to mention the world-famous *Intermezzo*, which, being played to an empty scene, was somewhat of an innovation. Its sentimentality is somewhat cloying, though it has certainly survived its hackneying tolerably well.

Despite his numerous efforts Mascagni, the creator of a style, remains a one-opera composer. *L'Amico Fritz* (1891), *I Rantzau* (1892), *Ratcliff* (1894), *Zanetto*, *Silvano* (1895), *Le Maschere* (1901), *Amica* (1905), and *Isabeau* (1911) did not realize the hopes raised by their predecessor. *Iris* (1898), which was recently revived in New York, is perhaps better than the rest. Its subject is Japanese and like other recent works it strives for Japanese local color and musical suggestion. It

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is a fantasy and aims for unreality rather than realism, and purports to be based on Japanese motives or poetic ideas. 'The poet and composer,' says Mr. Richard Aldrich, 'have between them succeeded in creating an atmosphere of singular and exotic quality; the piece is quaint; it has a certain bric-à-brac charm. But there is little potent dramatic motive in it, little that touches the imagination. * * * In the music Mascagni has got far away from the blatant musical style of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. * * * The later opera is the product of a more refined and sensitive mind than the earlier, a more delicate touch in orchestration, a subtle harmonic sense.' But of the rude vitality of *Cavalleria*, *Iris* shows none, and hence it will not last as long.

Ruggiero Leoncavallo with *I Pagliacci* bore the fate of Mascagni and *Cavalleria*. Even more so. For his *I Medici*, the beginning of an unfinished historical trilogy, *Bohème* (1897), *Zaza* (1906), and *Chatterton*, are mere names to all but the curious. Even his *Roland von Berlin*, written upon order for Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany, was a failure. But *I Pagliacci*, with its two acts, actually wrung the laurels of verism from *Cavalleria*.

The '*Pagliacci*' are a troop of travelling comedians, which includes Tonio, the clown (or Taddeo), Canio, the *Pagliaccio*, and his wife, Nedda, the Columbine. Tonio is in love with Nedda, but Nedda has listened to the sweet words of Silvio, a young man of the village in which the troop has arrived at the rise of the curtain. Tonio, overhearing Silvio and Nedda, is overcome by jealousy and fetches Canio, the husband, who arrives just in time to see Silvio disappearing without finding out who it is. Nedda will not be forced into telling his name; Beppo, the Harlequin, barely saves her from her furious husband's dagger. In the second act, which plays on the evening of the same day, the little theatre and its audience are shown. The play is an episode very much like the one which the principal actors are experiencing. Columbine is being made love to by Harlequin while her husband, *Pagliaccio*, is absent, and Taddeo is on the watch for his return. When the mimic

'I PAGLIACCI'; 'ANDREA CHÉNIER'; 'FEDORA'

Pagliaccio returns in the person of the jealous Canio, the play turns into real life. He again insists on learning the name of his wife's lover, and mad with jealous passion, stabs her when she refuses. Silvio, who has been one of the audience, rushes to her aid and is also killed by Canio, who turns to the terror-stricken audience, with the spoken words: '*La comedia è finita!*'

The success of *I Pagliacci* is certainly due rather to its choice of subject and dramatic effectiveness than to its music. Still, what there is of merit is Leoncavallo's own, for he wrote the text too. But he has not the melodiousness of Mascagni nor as much originality. He has made music as he heard it and leans heavily on his environment. It is not worth discussing in detail. The prologue is the most popular and perhaps the best piece in the opera. With Caruso's musical sobs and golden tones it is quite tolerable. ? ? *If you only know posterity ?*

Umberto Giordano (b. 1867) began his operatic career with *Mala vita* (Rome, 1892). He represents a branch of the realistic school that touches regions thus far strangers to music: there are political intrigues, literary ambitions and other unoperatic things. *Andrea Chénier* (text by Illica) was produced in Milan in 1896. Its chief character is the French poet whose name is its title; the scene Revolutionary Paris. Chénier is condemned to die by the guillotine. Madeleine, his beloved, upon learning his fate, enters his cell at night, bribing the jailor. She comforts her lover by her presence and cheerfully rides with him in the death cart to join him in death next morning.

Fedora followed in 1896. Its scene is laid in St. Petersburg, Paris and the Bernese Alps. It concerns the Russian Princess Fedora, who is to wed Count Vladimir Andrejevitch, a dissolute captain of the guard, but who is murdered on the night before the wedding is to take place. Suspicion fastens on Count Loris and the Princess vows vengeance. She follows the fugitive to Paris and by her charms has lured him into her society. But instead of hate she conceives a love for

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him and now fears the truth which will compel her to carry out her vow. He confesses his love, she admits that it is returned and, instead of delivering him over to the waiting guards, hides him in her apartment, notwithstanding his acknowledgment of his crime. But her incriminating letter to the authorities has resulted in the execution of Loris' brother and the death of the grief-stricken mother. In Act III the two lovers are enjoying the delights of nature in the Alps, when a dispatch arrives bearing his pardon. But a letter received at the same time reveals the tragedy that has befallen Loris' house. Upon learning that it is Fedora who has caused it all, he is about to kill her, but the Princess forestalls him by poisoning herself, receiving her lover's pardon as she dies.

Since *Mala vita* Giordano's musical substance had been gradually refined. In chosen moments he rises to heights of lyric passion. But though never ordinary, he is rarely gripping. As Bie says, it is all 'too intellectual for Italy, and too musical for the intellect.'

In *Siberia* (1904) he shows a sad falling-off. The opera reached New York in 1908 but was unable to maintain itself. Its libretto (by Illica) bears resemblance to Tolstoy's 'Resurrection,' but has none of its genius. The composer has used Russian folk-song material with some effect.

II

Giacomo Puccini (b. 1858) is by far the most successful of this school. Whether he is the best of them, or how good that best is, only time will tell. At any rate his popularity is deserved. He is finer than Mascagni, worthier than Leoncavallo, and warmer than Giordano; he struck a happy and pleasing medium. His style is, in a sense, not radically different from theirs, yet distinguished. Like them he alternates between hyper-lyricism and sing-song declamation, but maintains a clear balance between voice, melody and orchestra. His orchestration is not very subtle nor

PUCCINI'S EARLY OPERAS; 'MANON LESCAUT'

highly effective in the modern sense, but sensuously pleasing and well shaded.

Already in his youthful work, *Le Villi* (Milan, 1884), he shows a characteristic hand. But it is a weird theme which quite abandons the region of *verismo*, and the music is hardly capable of sustaining so mystic an atmosphere. The 'Villi' (in English Wilis) are, according to tradition, the spirits of affianced damsels whose lovers have proved faithless. In their bridal attire they rise from the earth at midnight, assemble upon the highway, dance wild dances until dawn and watch for their betrayers, who, if caught, are lured into their circle and whirled around till they expire from exhaustion. Puccini's opera tells the story of such a faithless lover, Robert, and his fiancée Anna. Her father, Wilhelm Wulf, is the only other character and the action takes place in the Black Forest of Germany. No local color is attempted in the music, but there is much weird suggestion and considerable imaginative force.

Edgar, which Puccini produced in Milan in 1889, was unsuccessful. *Manon Lescaut* (1897) came nine years after Massenet's setting of the same subject (see p. 450) and follows an entirely different plan. He takes a number of detached scenes from the Prévost novel, which have continuity only if one knows the story to start with.

There is, in the first act, the meeting of Manon with the Chevalier des Grieux at Amiens and their elopement in the post-chaise hired by Geronte, the elderly roué, who himself had planned to abduct the girl. The second act pictures her luxurious life with Geronte after having spent an idyllic honeymoon with the impecunious Des Grieux; her discovery there by Grieux and the resulting love scene in which they are surprised by the enraged Geronte; and it ends with her arrest as a *fille de joie*. The third act plays on the quay at Havre, where the unfortunate women are about to be deported to America. Manon has vainly attempted to escape, Grieux has visited her in prison; he is now a witness of her humiliation

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and wins the consent of the captain to embark with her as a cabin boy. The desolate end in America, the struggle in the desert, one long love-duet ending with Manon's death, constitute the last act.

Manon is not as popular as Puccini's later operas, because in it his style is still undeveloped. There are, however, evidences of real musicianship, such as the famous finale of the third act, and, in fact, the whole of the Havre scene, in which he rises to real tragedy. But there is no characterization, Manon and Grioux are the soprano and tenor of Italian opera. 'Compared with Massenet's, Puccini's music is better, but not good,' says Bie. 'But the mundane line which he developed in *Bohème* is not yet well developed, it consists of a sweetish scholarliness, which in climaxes loses itself in Wagnerian flourishes. * * * The insipidity of this music is often so enchanting that we can understand the tendency to abstract from it café music to be executed by languishing *tsiganes*.' Grioux's greeting to Manon, '*O come gravi le vostro parolo*,' in Act I; the duet of Manon and her brother; Manon's '*L'ora, o Tirsa, è vaga e bella*'; the love duet in Geronte's house; Grioux's pleading with the commandant, and his '*Non mi rispondi, amore*' in the last act are perhaps the most notable passages.

La Bohème came next. So far it is the best of Puccini and probably will remain so. To begin with he had one of the most fitting subjects that operatic realism ever lighted upon—the reality of life and the ideality of day-dreams, a genial atmosphere, engaging, clear-cut characters, a milieu full of romance, the romance of far-away to-day; the Latin Quarter that never was what it used to be, in 1840 or any other time; yet always so deliciously real to the heart that is young wherever it may be. Murger saw with the eyes and heard with the ears that are eternal; his people live and have always lived. They are classic figures that, despite

Facsimile of Puccini's Manuscript: a Page from the Score of
'La Bohème'

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PUCCINI'S 'LA BOHÈME'

their local attachment, have become universal. Rodolphe, the poet, Marcel, the painter, Schaunard, the musician, Colline, the philosopher; then Mimi, the pathetic little grisette, and Musette, the lighthearted, unprincipled strumpet—all that sad-gay company, poor in goods, rich in wit, potentially great and hopelessly mediocre, divinely careless and touchingly thoughtful—the most human figures that ever peopled a book. Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illico, the librettists, had an easy task in transferring these hardy plants to the soil of opera; they would live anywhere.

Four scenes from their happy-may-go existence have furnished as many acts in the opera. The first is the meeting of Mimi and Rodolphe in the latter's attic chamber. The four Bohemians are about to repair to the Café Momus to top off the feast that Schaunard has just been able to provide. They leave the poet behind to finish his work. Ere he can follow, Mimi, the frail, pretty creature, comes to beg a light and faints at the door. Rodolphe revives her with wine. As she is about to leave, she loses her key. While they search for it their candles go out; their hands meet in the dark and their love for each other is kindled. The second is the scene at the Café Momus. The crowd in the street is gay and festive. Rodolphe introduces Mimi, whom he has bought a new hat, to his companions; they eat, drink and make merry. Musette, the old-time flame of Marcel, appears with her wealthy state councillor, Alcindoro, and finds a pretext to get rid of him long enough to win the painter back. Seeing her friends embarrassed by the waiter's bill, the wily coquette leaves it to Alcindoro, while she and her friends march off in triumphal procession. The third act is the parting of Rodolphe and Mimi. The scene is the *Barrière d'Enfer*, the toll gate at the outer boulevard, outside the tavern where Marcel and Musette are living. The sombre bleakness of winter is over all. Rodolphe has come here resolved to part from his love, his fanciful jealousy has tortured them to this pass. Mimi, stricken with consumption, has come to confide in her friend Marcel, and while she hides herself she overhears Rodolphe's confession and his fears for her life. Her grief betrays her presence to him and a heart-rending farewell closes the act, which is accompanied by a burlesque counterpart in which Marcel and Musette again

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part company. In the last we are back with the two 'widower' artists in their studio of Act I. Schaunard and Colline join them and they have a feast over four rolls and a herring! Memories are tormenting the two friends. Presently Musette rushes in to tell them that Mimi is below, too weak to ascend the stairs, having begged to be taken back to Rodolphe—to die. She is carried up and made comfortable on the bed. Touching scenes follow one another—Mimi's gradual decline; her bringing about of the reconciliation of Musette and Marcel; her fresh avowal of love to Rodolphe, who brings out for her the little rose-colored bonnet that he bought her long ago; the noble sacrifice of the friends of Marcel and Musette who pawn her jewelry to buy medicines, of Colline who parts with his coat for the same purpose. The last duet of the principal lovers, full of reminiscences of past happiness, the quiet, imperceptible death of Mimi, the heart-rending grief of her lover and the friends' profound sympathy bring the opera to its close.

Puccini's music hardly merits a detailed analysis, not for reasons of inferiority, but because it is so facile, so easily comprehended, so unmistakable in its appeal. It is the music of modern Italy, the 'veristic' school softened into a now luscious, now gallant lyricism, rising now and then to passionate melodic climaxes whose emphasis is due to underlining rather than to an interior strengthening of the matter. Harmonically, there is no remarkable advance; Wagnerian freedom in key relations and the use of dissonance has found its way into this idiom, biting major sevenths in passing notes or appoggiaturas, radical juxtapositions of unrelated triads, altered chords, a rather mannered use of consecutive octaves and fifths (often very telling in coloristic effects) and a refreshing chromatic variety are its distinguishing characteristics. To this is to be added a very spontaneous, often sparkling, rhythmic animation akin to the *opéra comique* school and an effective if not highly ingenious orchestration.

Wagner's influence is, moreover, shown in a moderate use of the leading motive, by means of which Puccini effects an apt characterization of persons and at-

PUCCINI'S 'LA BOHÉME'

mospheres. Not only short, pregnant phrases like those identified with Marcel, the painter, but long lyrical passages (like that of Rodolphe's poetizing melody) are thus sophistically reiterated. These themes frequently reflect the character or object so spontaneously that they seem to be inspired simultaneously with it. The tender melody of Mimi, or the charmingly frivolous one of Musette, the melodic description of Rodolphe's erotic longings, and the familiar melody of the duet (which with other similar figures forms the thematic material of Rodolphe's and Mimi's love) are cases in point.

As examples of Puccini's tone-painting we may cite the series of fifths with which he indicates the confusion of the Christmas festival in the *Quartier latin*; and the short rhythmic staccato-figure accompanying street cries. The first is obviously related to a series of open fifths which in the third tableau paints the sombre bleakness of the *Barrière d'Enfer* like a hollow reflection of bygone joys.

The foregoing will indicate somewhat the essence of the work. While no such close relation between text and music exists as in Wagner (the veristic Italian school furnished no really poetic tests which would permit this), there *does* exist a community of thought between the general meaning and atmosphere of the scene, from which the prosaic words derive a certain poetic quality, and this Puccini has succeeded in expressing with sometimes gripping force. Needless to say, there is no division into lyric sections or concerted pieces—not even scenes. But a number of more or less formal sections can easily be culled from the score. The most notable of these are the first love scene in Act I, full of lyric beauty; Mimi's brief, caressing introduction to the duet of Act IV, and the duet itself, built out of the motive of their awakening love. Then there is Colline's farewell to his coat, in Act III, in a

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characteristically sombre mood. Then there must be mentioned the colorful ensemble of Act II with Mussette's waltz song, the symphony of street noises and the jollity of the Bohemians; the charming appeal to Marcel and the following duet of the two working up gradually into the quartet in which the fortunes of the two couples are decided. The ensembles of the last act are cleverly contrasted and full of dramatic feeling, especially the close after Mimi's death with its eloquent silences, its whispered words and the bitter pathos of the last melody, into which the full orchestra bursts fortissimo like into a mighty sob. 'A merry and yet a terrible existence.'

Let our analysis of *Bohème* stand for the Puccini type. None of the other works come up to it in quality, however. *Tosca* is a blood-curdling melodrama—the musical sublimation of the cinematograph—'verism' in its crudest, crassest form. Illica and Giacosa again wrote the book, but this time the source was Sardou (a far cry from Murger), whose original has been closely followed.

The scene is laid in Rome in Napoleonic times. Angelotti, a revolutionist, senator of the moribund republic of Rome, has been captured by the authorities and confined in the fortress. At the opening of the opera he has made good his escape to the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, where his sister has hidden clothing to aid in his flight. His friend Cavaradossi, a painter (at work in the church upon a painting of Mary Magdalen and waited upon by the Sacristan), becomes his accomplice by allowing him to hide in his villa. Cavaradossi is in love with the famous singer, Tosca, passionate and jealous, who, recognizing a resemblance between the Magdalen and Angelotti's sister, becomes suspicious of her lover. This feeling is seized upon by the profligate chief of police, Scarpia, who soon arrives to trace the escaped prisoner. The chapel in which Angelotti was hiding is found unlocked, though nobody but Cavaradossi had a key; in it is found a fan bearing the Angelotti arms. Tosca, enraged, pursues her lover, who is then traced to her villa. The ceremony and indicated festivi-

'TOSCA' AND 'MADAMA BUTTERFLY'

ties upon the occasion of Mela's victory over Napoleon, which close the act, are mere 'scene' in the manner of the historical opera.

Act II is ghastly in its exaggerated realism. Scarpia in his apartments in the Farnese palace awaits news from his henchmen, while the Queen, below, is celebrating the victory by a cantata in which Tosca, upon whom Scarpia has immoral designs, sings the solo. The henchmen report that Angelotti has escaped, but his accomplice, Cavaradossi, is taken. Led in, the painter refuses to divulge his knowledge; Tosca appears and throws herself in his arms. He is led to an adjoining chamber and, while he is being tortured, Tosca is made to suffer by the knowledge of it. Finally she consents to tell all she knows. Her lover is brought back half dead, but before Tosca can say more, a messenger arrives to tell of Napoleon's victory at Marengo. This gives the tortured man new strength. He cries 'Victory, victory!' and hurls a malediction against his prosecutor. In his anger Scarpia orders his death and holds Tosca back. She pleads for her lover; Scarpia names his price—her love. In utter desperation she finally yields and obtains a safe-conduct for herself and her lover. But in the last moment she escapes her shame by stabbing the vile profligate with a sharp knife which she has just discovered on the table.

But the bargain that Scarpia has struck is foul deceit. A sham execution 'like Palmieri's,' to allay suspicion, was to precede Cavaradossi's liberation. This Tosca confides to her lover in Act III, after he has been led to the platform of the fortress, whither she has followed him. She tells him all that has happened and bids him have courage and feign death; for he is not to die in reality and both will be happy. The execution follows—a mere formality—the soldiers level their guns, a shot, he falls. But it is *not* a sham, he is dead and does not answer. Tosca is horrified and presently the henchmen of Scarpia arrive to avenge *his* death too. But Tosca anticipates them, she climbs to the parapet and throws herself into the abyss below, before the eyes of the horror-stricken soldiers.

'A disgusting text,' says Bie, 'bloody, not only in its subject matter but in its execution. A music, with bells, choirs, concerts, secret dances, ecstatic phrases, a butchery in the guise of the amiable—murder with a

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smiling face.' Nevertheless there are isolated beauties, bursts of Italian lyricism, such as the duet of the lovers in Act III and the two arias of Act I, Mario's '*Recondita armonia*,' and Tosca's '*Non la sospiri la nostra casetta*.' Dramatic qualities are not in this music. Besides the two lovers and the contemptible Scarpia, there are no characters—only puppets. The tripping Sacristan provides a little diversion, but it is too obvious. No, one hearing of *Tosca* is enough. *Tosca* was first produced in Rome, Jan. 13, 1900.

Next came *Madama Butterfly*, the second best of Puccini's operas. A play by John Luther Long and David Belasco furnished the basis for the libretto (by Illica and Giacosa). It is the story of a Geisha girl. The scene is the Japanese port of Nagasaki.

The American naval lieutenant Pinkerton falls in love with 'Madam Butterfly,' the Geisha girl, whose real name is Chio-Chio-San. He buys her for a hundred yen from the tea-house proprietor (and marriage broker) Goro, and marries her after the Japanese custom. While he considers the whole affair a pleasant diversion, she takes the union very seriously. After he leaves she gives birth to a child by him, and with it waits three years for his return. When he does return it is in the company of a charming American lady who has meantime become his lawful wife. When Kate hears of the child she prevails upon Butterfly to give it up. Butterfly consents on condition that Pinkerton shall fetch it. Unable to bear this twofold grief, she seeks the consolation of death in true Japanese fashion, while Pinkerton's voice is heard calling to her from outside.

This tragic little tale has been clothed in a delicately exotic mantle of sound, quite convincing in its exoticism, however untrue, and really impassioned at times, though the consecutive fifths (which have done service for diverse effects) pall at times in their Asiatic mask. Technically the opera marks no advance, but attempts greater dramatic heights than its predecessors—on the whole to its own detriment. But the last solo scene of

'THE GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST'

Butterfly with its dreary drawn-out tragedy sustains a high note; full of atmosphere, touching and caressing the ear with its luscious melodiousness, it remains long in the memory. This Italian melody is, after all, its important feature. In the fluid tones of a Destinn or of a Farrar (whose comeliness makes up what she lacks in dramatic power) it is a real delight even to a blasé opera-goer. The love duet which closes the first act will long be admired for its impassioned lyricism. There is *finesse* in the orchestra, too, and much atmospheric quality, especially in the 'waiting' scene, with the fall of night.

'The Girl of the Golden West' (*Fanciulla del West*) is not on a level with Puccini's *chefs d'œuvre*s. It is evidently a concession (and a profitable one) to Puccini's most lucrative market—America. Its Americanism is about as real as the Japanese atmosphere of *Madama Butterfly*.

'The Girl of the Golden West' is adapted faithfully from David Belasco's play of the same name. To all readers of Bret Harte the drama will come as a picture of the life of a California which has completely passed away (if it ever existed)—the California of the 1849 gold-hunting craze, where pistols took the place of courts of law, and where a rough and ready code of honor did duty for ethics. In this atmosphere the orphan Minnie has lived for some years without ever having been kissed. Besides teaching the miners their Sunday school lessons, she is very pretty and is worshipped as a sort of goddess, other marks of purity being somewhat scarce in the region. But the sheriff of the neighborhood, one Jack Rance, is much in love with her, and although married to a woman back east, is anxious to make her his wife. In the first act we see the goings-on of the 'Polka' bar-room. Here the miners gather and drink after their day's work is done. They gamble and nearly lynch a cheater. They hear the reports of the 'greaser' robber Ramerrez, and listen to their Sunday school lesson from Minnie. The girl, on her side, listens to Rance's proposal of marriage, and rejects him because he is married and also because she dislikes him. Then a certain Dick Johnson enters. Minnie has known him back in

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the old days, and promptly falls in love with him. The miners go out in search of the robber Ramerrez, and leave Johnson and Minnie to a duet which is one of the best things in the opera.

The second act passes the same night in Minnie's cabin. Johnson enters to call on her, as pre-arranged, and Minnie, amid the blustering of the wind, receives her first kiss. Johnson hides as Rance enters to tell Minnie that her beau is no other than Ramerrez the robber. After Rance has gone, Johnson confesses the truth to Minnie, tells her that his life was changed the moment he met her, and vows to go out and meet his fate like a man. He leaves, but a moment later falls back into the cabin, bleeding with pistol wounds. Minnie's love returns with overwhelming power, and she hides him in the garret. Rance enters in search of his prey. After having searched the place he is convinced that no one is there, but just as he is leaving he notices a drop of blood on his hand. Searching once more he finds Johnson in the garret and makes him come down. Minnie pleads with him, and finally offers to play a game of cards; if she wins her lover's life is to be spared; if she loses she will marry the sheriff. They play, while Johnson looks on. Rance has promised to be a sport, and to abide by the result of the card game. But Minnie has no intention of losing. She commits the capital sin of the country—hiding a card in her stocking and cheating to win, without being caught. Rance accepts his lot and leaves the cabin.

But Johnson has still to escape the mob. In the last act, in the forest, they are waiting for him. While trying to escape he is captured, and is about to be hanged when Minnie appears. She pleads with all the men, and wins them one by one to her side. They grant freedom to her and her lover, and the two depart for another and distant home, while the sunset reddens the great trees of the forest.

The opera is the extreme of the *verismo* school, but Puccini has not neglected to insert a few pages of pure melody in his best style. One of these is the 'Home Song' sung by the community minstrel in the first act, and another is the waltz which follows soon after Johnson's entrance. The love scene in the first act is a notable passage, but that in the second is rather conventional. The music of the card game is in Puccini's

WOLF-FERRARI'S 'LE DONNE CURIOSE'

best realistic style. In the third act one remembers Johnson's aria which he sings just before his expected hanging, and the final scene in which he departs with Minnie. If the inspiration frequently sags in the score, the instrumentation is throughout that of a master.

III

The lighter note that Verdi struck with his *Falstaff*, that had found its German counterpart in Cornelius's Barber and Wagner's *Meistersinger* and had run like a fine stream of effervescence through the course of post-Wagnerian opera (beginning with Urspruch's *Das Unmöglichste von Allem* in 1897), has had its most recent reiteration at the hands of Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, the composer of *Le Donne curiose* and *Il segreto di Suzanna*. This composer (b. 1876 in Venice), of German and Italian parentage, a pupil of Rheinberger in Munich and director of the conservatory in Venice, has to his credit some fine chamber music, and notably a chamber symphony. He is a worker in fine materials, a dry-point etcher in music, in opera a resurrector of the spirit of Mozart and the *buffa*.

He carries his chamber technique into his operas. The score of 'The Curious Women' has besides the usual strings only flutes, clarinets, oboes, horns (only two of each), with timpani and harp. Economy of means, but not always with the desired effect of delicacy. It has been said that Wolf-Ferrari's small orchestra proves only the efficacy of a large modern one, even for such delicate purposes as his. Beyond this tendency toward utmost delicacy and finesse, his work represents an attempt at an impressionistic style in the field of comic opera. Deliberately planned, gradually worked-up climaxes are consciously dispensed with; a light, rapid but drastic conversational style is aimed at

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—in some respects these are elements of reaction, in others of real achievement in the development of opera.

Le donne curiose (which, by the way, was preceded by *La Sulamita*, Venice, 1889, and *Cenerentola*, 1900) was produced in Munich in 1903. Its text is an adaptation of a Goldoni * comedy by Count Luigi Lugana. Its story is briefly this:

A number of Venetian citizens have formed a social club, *Amicitia*, whose chief constitutional clause excludes women. This arouses the wives' curiosity as to its nature and various rumors have it that its members pursue alchemy, that gambling is the attraction, etc., etc. A young woman whose betrothed is a member, makes the other women suspicious. Since the men will not divulge their secret, the women resort to a ruse: they get hold of a key to the Casino and discover to their own shame that the club is devoted to nothing more than the epicurean ideal of a good dinner. Two married couples, Lelio and Eleonora, Ottavio and Beatrice, the latter's daughter Rosaura and her betrothed, Florindo, are the chief characters. Pantalone, the president, and Leander are other members of the mysterious club. Arlecchino is Pantalone's servant.

'I wish my music to bring joy and truth,' Wolf-Ferrari has said. He has brought joy at any rate, for his pages are full of charm, sparkle and lyric beauty, though in many respects he has forsaken the path of the moderns. The most remarkable thing is, perhaps, that he does not develop his motives. His orchestra accompanies the singer with constantly changing fragments and 'tonal gestures.' It is an improvisational style, broken up into many minute periods and would, one should think, lack continuity. But Wolf-Ferrari's command of the rhythmic element enables him to endow his score with a vividness that sustains interest irrespective of melodic formation. The obtaining of effects with minute means is his great forte.

* Carlo Goldoni (b. 1707), the Italian Molière, had furnished subjects to many an eighteenth-century opera composer—witness Piccini (with *La buona figliuola*), etc., etc.

'LE GIOJE DELLA MADONNA'

From the first note of the prelude, whose keynote is the reiterative phrase which signifies the 'banishment' of the women, the music scintillates with sparkling rhythms, and ingratiating turns of melody. The trio of the men in the first scene of Act I, that of the women in the second scene, the quartet of Act II and the ensemble of the last scene of Act III remind us of Mozart and the earlier Italians in their vivacity; the love soliloquy of Rosaura in Act II is a fine Mozartian *andante cuntable* and the following love song of Florindo is no less beautiful. Their duet following this is full of pretty sentiment and not without a touch of humor, with its final languishing 'Ah.' Finally, the wonderful mood picture of Venice which opens Act III should be mentioned. It is followed by a barcarolle chorus (the only chorus in the opera) that begins like the familiar German song, *Der Mai ist gekommen*. (It is, in fact, a song composed by the Viennese composer Joseph Weigl [1766-1846], which has become a folk-song in Venice.)

In *Die vier Grobiane* (Munich, 1906) and in *Il Segreto di Susanna*, an 'Interlude in one act' (text by Enrico Golisciani), Wolf-Ferrari tried to do much the same sort of thing as in the 'Curious Women.' The latter was produced in 1911. Its plot is as follows:

Count Gil is an autocratic young man who, having no vices himself, forbids the practice of any in his castle. One day, finding an unmistakable odor of tobacco not only in his rooms but on his young bride's clothing, he becomes very much agitated, and is convinced that she is entertaining another lover, for suspicion cannot successfully be fastened on anyone in his household. Suzanne, who enjoys smoking and still more enjoys the excitement of having a secret from her husband, fears that he has discovered her diversion. Gil makes futile attempts to control his jealousy until his suspicions are proven, but finally accuses Suzanne of faithlessness. She, misinterpreting his allusions, begs to be allowed to keep her 'little secret.' Her coolness horrifies him and he goes out, resolved to return

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unexpectedly and trap the 'villain.' He discovers, instead, his wife smoking; in his great relief and joy he also promises to learn to smoke.

But *Le gioje della Madonna* ('The Jewels of the Madonna'), which came in 1908, is in quite another vein. It belongs to the blood-letting *verismo* of the pure Italians, but (Wolf-Ferrari is not a pure Italian) it does not follow its course to the limit. Curiously it does not lean to the German side by way of moderation, but to the French; the color and rhythm of *Carmen* lives again in its pages. The result is, to quote Bie, a 'fusion that has enough southern passion and enough French dances and enough modern melody, that melody of which the *Carmen* songs will long remain eternal models.' It has been said that Wolf-Ferrari turned his back on his earlier style, his fine musicianly 'archaism,' in order to make money in fashionable wares, but he himself has quite rightly said that one style does not fit everything: 'When I deal with puppets of the eighteenth century, I am graceful; and passionate, when it is a question of the sensuality and religion of modern Naples.' Here is the theme, in Bie's summary.

'The savage Maliella is beloved by Gennaro, a pious smith, and also by Rafaele, an atheistic Camorrist. She induces Gennaro to steal the jewels of the Madonna for her and succumbs to Rafaele, who turns from her as from a she-devil. She seeks death in the sea, Gennaro stabs himself before the Madonna's image, and Rafaele—goes to woo another.'

These scenes the composer has drawn in a few strong lines, and the environment has been painted in vivid colors—popular confusion, church festivals, the Camorra and its rottenness. We need not dwell on details. They are not savory morsels to turn over on one's tongue.

ZANDONAI'S 'CONCHITA,' ETC.

IV

The 'verismo' tradition of recent Italian opera has for the most part reached back in two directions—toward the early Mascagni, with his close touch with southern Italian folk-song; or toward Richard Strauss with his studied brutality of dissonance. 'The Jewels of the Madonna' is an example of the former derivation (with a touch of Bizet added); 'The Girl of the Golden West,' of the latter. There is just one Italian opera composer of eminence who can show a different set of influences in his musical style—or much rather, an individuality which places him quite apart from his countrymen. This is Riccardo Zandonai. His style is drawn rather from the modern French school than from either Germany or Italy; it cultivates ceaselessly the chromatic modulation, but preserves at the same time a distinct polyphony which is not so often to be found in the works of the modern Frenchmen. His dramatic sense is keen and often enough brutal, but he has nevertheless a romantic strain of the finest quality. His earliest opera, 'The Cricket on the Hearth,' revealed immature experimentation; it was based upon, or rather took its rise from, the weaker of the lyrical opera-writers of Italy, though it showed certain individual tendencies in the direction of chromatic progression. But in his second opera, *Conchita*, Zandonai made a sensation which carried the work across the border of Italy and across the ocean to America. This showed no trace of immaturity; the style was homogeneous throughout, perfectly fused, and perfectly adapted to its dramatic purpose. It is a style involving scarcely any set melody, a style of scraps and strands of music, weaving together into a symphony of much interest as absolute music, yet subjectively fitted to the action on the stage with great nicety. In his

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next opera, *Melenis*, Zandonai went even further with this style, creating a work quite distinct among the operatic outpourings of modern Italy, and one which must command the sincerest admiration. Because of the uninteresting character of the plot, the scene of which is laid in Imperial Rome, the opera has been a failure. A still more recent opera, *Francesca da Rimini* (based on d'Annunzio's play), shows Zandonai's talent in still fuller development. The work is broader, more melodious, more romantic in character. Owing to the lack of performances up to the time of this writing, it is unfair to judge of the score, further than to say that it promises the highest things for the future. It is on *Conchita*, therefore, that Zandonai's fame still rests.

The libretto has been made the subject of violent protest, because of its brutally immoral nature. It is based upon a novel of Pierre Louys, *La Femme et le Pantin*, which was 'toned down' for operatic use, and yet remained painful. The hero, Mateo, a wealthy merchant, meets Conchita, employed in a Spanish cigarette factory, and makes love to her. She pretends to receive his advances, and invites him to meet her that night at her home, where she is living with her mother. He gives her a gold piece to seal the bargain. When he arrives (in the second act) he arranges matters with the family, but makes what appears to be the fatal mistake of slipping Conchita's mother a roll of bills. This enrages the girl, who objects to being 'bought.' (It is probable that she is playing with him all along.) She dashes off to live a life of her own. Months later (in the third act) Mateo finds her dancing and singing in a low café. They renew their acquaintance, and she, after a love scene, promises to accept from him the temporary use of a dwelling house, where he is to meet her the next night. When he arrives, the gates are barred and she laughs at him. The next morning (in the fourth act) she worms her way into Mateo's house to taunt him with his failure. He seizes the opportunity to knock her down and almost kills her. Thereupon, it seems, she is convinced of 'his great love for her' and offers herself to him. Following that, presumably, they live happily ever afterward.

MONTEMEZZI'S 'L'AMORE DEI TRE RE'

In the general reaction that is taking place against the 'verismo' fashion, one composer of distinctly reactionary trend has come out triumphant. This is Italo Montemezzi, who has made a sensational success in Italy, America, and other lands with his *L'Amore dei tre re*. His music is by no means in the sugary mid-century Italian manner, with its florid melody and its use of the orchestra as 'a big guitar.' It is full-blooded and rich—Wagnerian, one might loosely say—with a melody which is emotionally and dramatically poignant while preserving a beautiful melodic contour. The harmony is rarely dissonant in the modern style, and there is very little use of the leit-motif. Still the music flows along continuously, disregarding any division into aria and recitative, ranging, according to the dramatic conditions, all the way from a *parlante* to the fullest impassioned melody. The orchestration is highly colored, and the vocal parts extremely grateful. Altogether it is, musically, a very respectable work, not original in a radical sense, but creative in that it never loses its grip on impassioned beauty.

But far finer than the music is the magnificent play by Sem Benelli from which the libretto was made, or rather condensed (since there was little change made in the original text beyond the cutting of the less important passages). The 'three kings' who love Fiora are barons of early mediæval Italy. Avito represents the old Italy. His estate and castle have been seized by the rude invaders from the North, and his beloved Fiora has been made the wife of Manfredo. And old Archibaldo, Manfredo's blind father, has become passionately attached to Italy, the soft and lovely land of his adoption, and also to his daughter-in-law Fiora, who symbolizes this new land for him. In the first act, a spacious hall in the castle, Manfredo has gone off to war, leaving his bride in the care of his father. Then Avito comes, declaring his love for Fiora and urging her to flee with him. She refuses; her sense of duty is strong and she has grown somewhat to love her husband. Archibaldo enters, suspicious, but Avito escapes, and Fiora lies successfully. Manfredo comes suddenly home from

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the war and Archibaldo stifles his desire to tell his suspicions. In the second act Manfredo and Fiora are on the battlements of the castle. He is going again to the war and bids Fiora wave him adieu from the tower. Soon he has gone, and Fiora prepares to fulfill her promise. But Avito enters—not to beg her to go with him this time, but merely to take a final kiss before leaving her forever. Again Archibaldo, who is continually prowling about, enters. He hears the footsteps of the departing Avito, urges Fiora to confess the man's name, and when she refuses, strangles her. Manfredo returns to find her dead. In the third act Fiora's body is lying in the crypt of the castle, while the servants chant a funeral song. But Archibaldo has prepared a plot to catch the guilty man. He has put poison on Fiora's dead lips, knowing that the lover will come for a last kiss. Avito does come, and Manfredo finds him taking his kiss. He assaults his rival, and then snatches a kiss himself. The poison works, and both men die. Archibaldo enters to see the ruin that has been wrought, and laments with a double grief, for we suspect that his love for Fiora was not entirely that of a father.

The drama, which is strong and straightforward with the strength of an epic tale, is said to be a parable of old and new Italy. It is unquestionably the finest of all modern Italian librettos. The score has many fine pages. In particular we should mention Archibaldo's praise of Italy in the first act, the love music and the finale of the second act, and the funeral music of the third.

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